



US007515557B1

(12) **United States Patent**
Bims

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 7,515,557 B1**
(45) **Date of Patent:** **Apr. 7, 2009**

- (54) **RECONFIGURATION OF A COMMUNICATION SYSTEM** 5,636,220 A 6/1997 Vook et al.
- 5,717,688 A 2/1998 Belanger et al.
- 5,774,461 A 6/1998 Hyden et al.

(75) Inventor: **Harry Bims**, Menlo Park, CA (US)

(73) Assignee: **Broadcom Corporation**, Irvine, CA (US)

(Continued)

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 922 days.

FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

WO WO 96/22636 7/1996

(21) Appl. No.: **10/133,804**

(22) Filed: **Apr. 25, 2002**

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation-in-part of application No. 10/044,480, filed on Jan. 11, 2002, now Pat. No. 6,760,318.

Karkhanechi et al. "Voice Quality of Cellular Mobile Phones". IEEE. Aug. 3-6, 1997. pp. 485-488.*

(Continued)

(51) **Int. Cl.**
H04J 1/10 (2006.01)

Primary Examiner—Edan Orgad
Assistant Examiner—Salman Ahmed

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **370/315**; 455/522; 455/11.1

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—Sterne, Kessler, Goldstein & Fox P.L.L.C.

(58) **Field of Classification Search** 370/338, 370/349, 352

See application file for complete search history.

(57) **ABSTRACT**

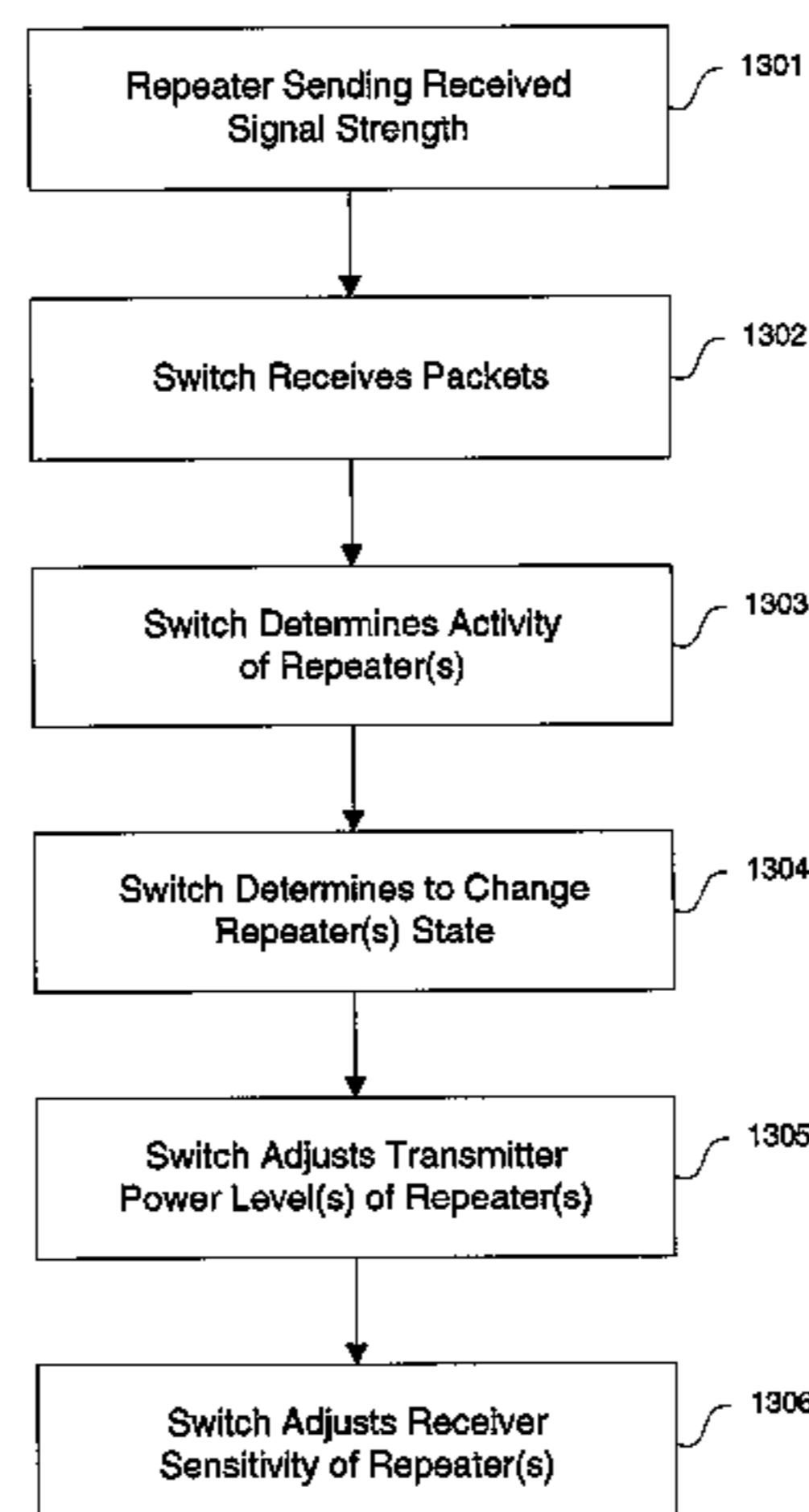
(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

- 4,166,927 A * 9/1979 Hamaoki 455/455
- 4,284,848 A 8/1981 Frost
- 4,363,129 A 12/1982 Cohn et al.
- 4,534,061 A 8/1985 Ulug
- 4,809,257 A * 2/1989 Gantenbein et al. 398/128
- 5,093,927 A 3/1992 Shanley
- 5,257,408 A * 10/1993 Olson et al. 455/67.16
- 5,267,262 A * 11/1993 Wheatley, III 455/522
- 5,392,449 A 2/1995 Shaughnessy et al.
- 5,461,627 A 10/1995 Rypinski
- 5,475,683 A 12/1995 Harrison et al.
- 5,479,400 A 12/1995 Dilworth et al.
- 5,507,035 A 4/1996 Bantz et al.
- 5,548,837 A 8/1996 Hess et al.
- 5,594,731 A 1/1997 Reissner

A communication system and method are described. In one embodiment, the method comprises a switch receiving information from at least one repeater for each packet received without errors by the at least one repeater, the switch, in response to the information, determining an amount of wireless communication activity each of the at least one repeater is experiencing, the switch determining whether to cause one or more repeaters to change status regarding wireless reception and transmission of packets from other devices in the network based on repeater location and repeater density and the information received from the at least one repeater, and the switch causing a change in the status for at least one of the one or more repeaters by signaling to the at least one of the one or more repeaters.

42 Claims, 18 Drawing Sheets



U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

5,815,811	A	9/1998	Pinard et al.	6,842,777	B1	1/2005	Tuli
5,818,829	A	10/1998	Raith et al.	6,857,095	B2	2/2005	Suumaki et al.
5,825,776	A	10/1998	Moon	6,862,448	B1 *	3/2005	Bims 455/432.1
5,838,226	A	11/1998	Hougy et al.	6,959,177	B1 *	10/2005	Oouchi 455/254
5,862,481	A	1/1999	Kulkarni et al.	7,003,272	B1 *	2/2006	Mader et al. 455/254
5,875,179	A	2/1999	Tikalsky	7,035,633	B2	4/2006	Kirkpatrick
5,875,186	A	2/1999	Belanger et al.	7,039,017	B2	5/2006	Sherlock
5,903,834	A	5/1999	Wallstedt et al.	7,113,498	B2	9/2006	Bajic
5,923,702	A	7/1999	Brenner et al.	7,236,470	B1	6/2007	Bims
5,923,792	A	7/1999	Shyu et al.	7,257,378	B2 *	8/2007	Pinola 455/67.11
5,946,308	A	8/1999	Dobbins et al.	2001/0024953	A1	9/2001	Balogh
5,958,018	A	9/1999	Eng et al.	2002/0037719	A1 *	3/2002	Ariga et al. 455/423
5,968,126	A	10/1999	Ekstrom et al.	2002/0055362	A1 *	5/2002	Aoyama 455/456
5,979,757	A	11/1999	Tracy et al.	2002/0060995	A1	5/2002	Cervello et al.
5,987,062	A	11/1999	Engwer et al.	2002/0061763	A1	5/2002	Weissman
5,991,287	A	11/1999	Diepstraten et al.	2002/0075825	A1	6/2002	Hills et al.
6,002,918	A	12/1999	Heiman et al.	2002/0075844	A1	6/2002	Hagen
6,011,970	A	1/2000	McCarthy	2002/0085719	A1 *	7/2002	Crosbie 380/248
6,038,448	A	3/2000	Chheda et al.	2002/0131386	A1	9/2002	Gwon
6,052,598	A	4/2000	Rudrapatna et al.	2002/0167965	A1	11/2002	Beasley et al.
6,058,106	A	5/2000	Cudak et al.	2002/0183069	A1 *	12/2002	Myr 455/456
6,067,297	A	5/2000	Beach	2002/0188723	A1	12/2002	Choi et al.
6,084,528	A	7/2000	Beach et al.	2003/0012168	A1	1/2003	Elson et al.
6,085,238	A	7/2000	Yuasa et al.	2003/0021250	A1	1/2003	Willins et al.
6,097,707	A	8/2000	Hodzic et al.	2003/0051170	A1	3/2003	Spearman
6,115,615	A	9/2000	Ota et al.	2003/0063583	A1	4/2003	Padovani et al.
6,130,896	A	10/2000	Lueker et al.	2003/0087629	A1	5/2003	Juitt et al.
6,137,791	A	10/2000	Frid et al.	2003/0106067	A1	6/2003	Hoskins et al.
6,137,802	A	10/2000	Jones et al.	2003/0112778	A1	6/2003	Lundby
6,138,009	A	10/2000	Birgerson	2003/0119523	A1 *	6/2003	Bulthuis 455/456
6,178,426	B1	1/2001	Klein et al.	2003/0120801	A1	6/2003	Keever et al.
6,188,681	B1	2/2001	Vesuna	2003/0133422	A1 *	7/2003	Bims 370/328
6,188,898	B1	2/2001	Phillips	2003/0146835	A1	8/2003	Carter
6,199,753	B1	3/2001	Tracy et al.	2003/0228885	A1 *	12/2003	Hattori et al. 455/556.1
6,243,581	B1	6/2001	Jawanda	2004/0152471	A1	8/2004	MacDonald et al.
6,253,082	B1	6/2001	Hengeveld	2005/0063347	A1	3/2005	Sarkkinen
6,259,898	B1	7/2001	Lewis	2005/0221817	A1 *	10/2005	Pinola 455/423
6,285,665	B1	9/2001	Chuah	2005/0227619	A1 *	10/2005	Lee et al. 455/22
6,285,886	B1	9/2001	Kamel et al.	2005/0286466	A1 *	12/2005	Tagg et al. 370/329
6,307,837	B1	10/2001	Ichikawa et al.	2007/0025349	A1	2/2007	Bejic
6,370,380	B1	4/2002	Norefors et al.	2008/0031185	A1	2/2008	Bims
6,393,261	B1	5/2002	Lewis				
6,396,841	B1	5/2002	Co et al.				
6,404,772	B1	6/2002	Beach et al.				
6,405,049	B2	6/2002	Herrod et al.				
6,411,608	B2	6/2002	Sharony				
6,420,995	B1 *	7/2002	Richmond et al. 342/45				
6,452,915	B1	9/2002	Jorgensen				
6,459,700	B1	10/2002	Hoang				
6,477,670	B1	11/2002	Ahmadvand				
6,487,184	B1	11/2002	Pecen et al.				
6,501,582	B2	12/2002	Chiou et al.				
6,522,880	B1	2/2003	Verma et al.				
6,522,881	B1	2/2003	Feder et al.				
6,556,547	B1	4/2003	Srikanth et al.				
6,594,475	B1	7/2003	Anvekar et al.				
6,611,547	B1	8/2003	Rauhala				
6,622,020	B1 *	9/2003	Seki 455/456.2				
6,661,782	B1	12/2003	Mustajarvi et al.				
6,674,403	B2	1/2004	Gray et al.				
6,683,866	B1	1/2004	Stanwood et al.				
6,717,924	B2	4/2004	Ho et al.				
6,745,049	B1 *	6/2004	Uchida et al. 455/560				
6,757,286	B1	6/2004	Stone				
6,760,318	B1 *	7/2004	Bims 370/332				
6,760,877	B1	7/2004	Lappetelainen et al.				
6,788,658	B1 *	9/2004	Bims 370/328				
6,799,054	B2	9/2004	Shpak				
6,834,192	B1	12/2004	Watanabe et al.				
6,836,469	B1	12/2004	Wu				
6,839,560	B1	1/2005	Bahl et al.				

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Safavi, S. Lopes, L. B. Mogensen, P. E. Frederiksen, F. (Personal, Indoor and Mobile Radio Communications, 1995. PIMRC'95. 'Wireless: Merging onto the Information Superhighway', Sixth IEEE International Symposium on Publication Date: Sep. 27-29, 1995 vol. 3, On p. 1351-Meeting Date: Sep. 27, 1995-Sep. 29, 1995.*

Pankaj Goyal. Automatic gain control in burst communications systems. RF design. Feb. 2000, 34-56.*

Ali Soheil Sadri: Novel Adaptive Power and Rate Control in Third Generation Wideband CDMA Mobile Systems, under the direction of Dr. Winser Alexander—2000—lib.ncsu.edu.*

PCT International Search Report mailed Apr. 15, 2003 for International Application No. PCT/US03/00783 (4 pages).

PCT International Search Report mailed Apr. 25, 2003 for International Application No. PCT/US03/0782.

Messier, Andrew et al., "Performance Monitoring of a Wireless Campus Area Network," Local Computer Networks, 1997, Proceedings, 22nd Annual Conference on Nov. 1997, pp. 232-238.

Bahl, Paramvir and Padmanabhan, Vankata N., "Radar: An In-Building RF-based User Location and Tracking System," Proceedings of IEEE INFOCOMM 200, Mar. 2000, pp. 775-784.

Lucent Technologies Inc., Orinoco Manager Suite—User's Guide, Nov. 2000.

H. Bims, , U.S. Appl. No. 10/044,512, filed Jan. 11, 2002, entitled "Location Tracking In A Wireless Communication System Using Power Levels Of Packets Received By Repeaters".

Bim, Harry, "Plug-n-playable Wireless Communications System" U.S. Appl. No. 10/661,163, filed Sep. 12, 2003.

Bim, Harry, "Single-Frequency Wireless Communications System"
U.S. Appl. No. 10/661,107, filed Sep. 12, 2003.

Bim, Harry, "Tunneling Protocols for Wireless Communications"
U.S. Appl. No. 10/661,218, filed Sep. 12, 2003.

Charles Perkins, Mobile IP, IEEE Communications Magazine, dated
May 1997, pp. 84-99.

IEEE Std 802.11-1997, Information Technology-Telecommunications and Information Exchange Between Systems-Local and Metropolitan Area Networks-Specific Requirements-Part 11: Wireless LAN Medium Access Control (MAC) and Physical Layer (PHY) Specifications, Published by IEEE dated 1997.

* cited by examiner

Today's Ethernet

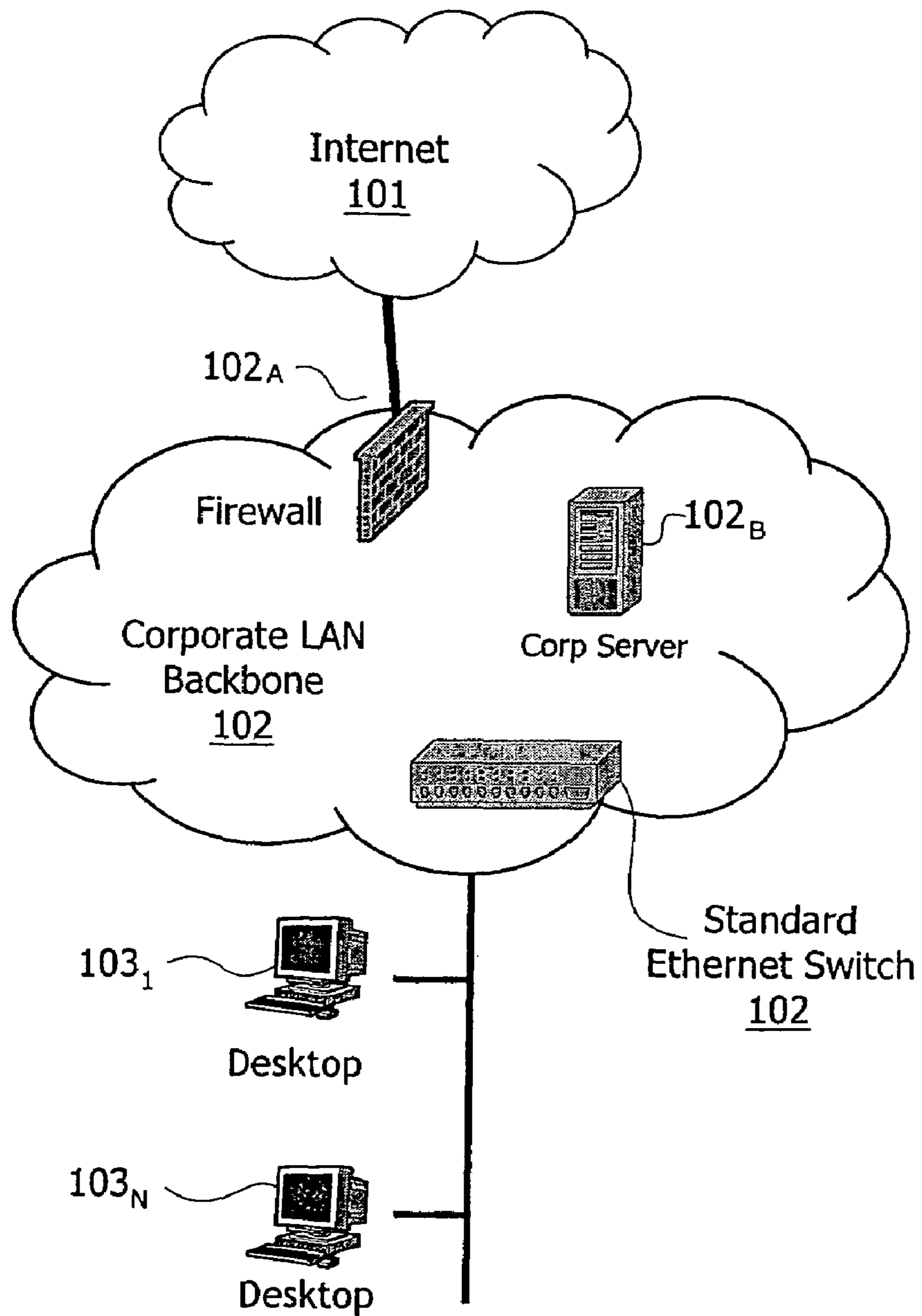


FIG. 1

PRIOR ART

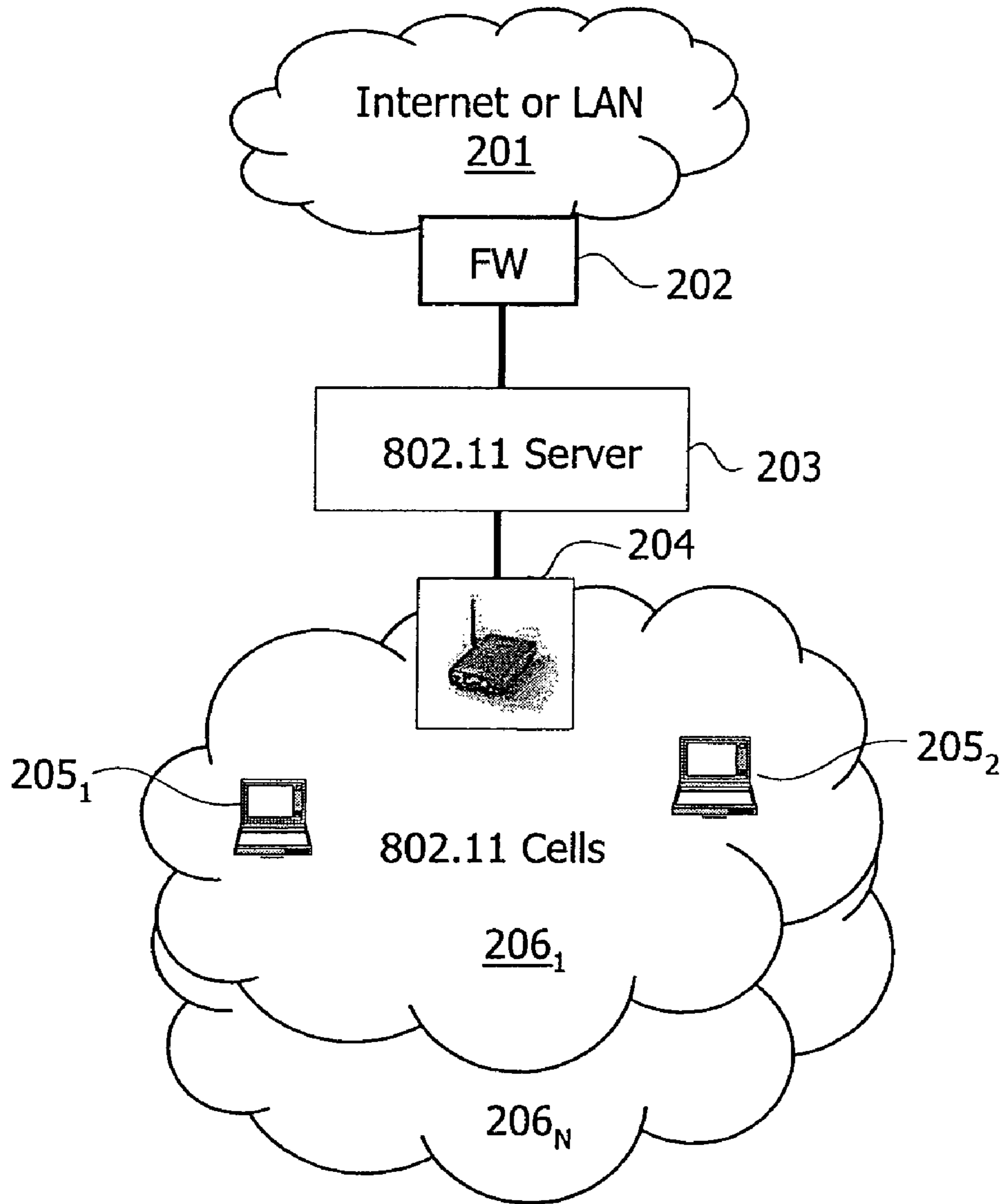


FIG. 2
PRIOR ART

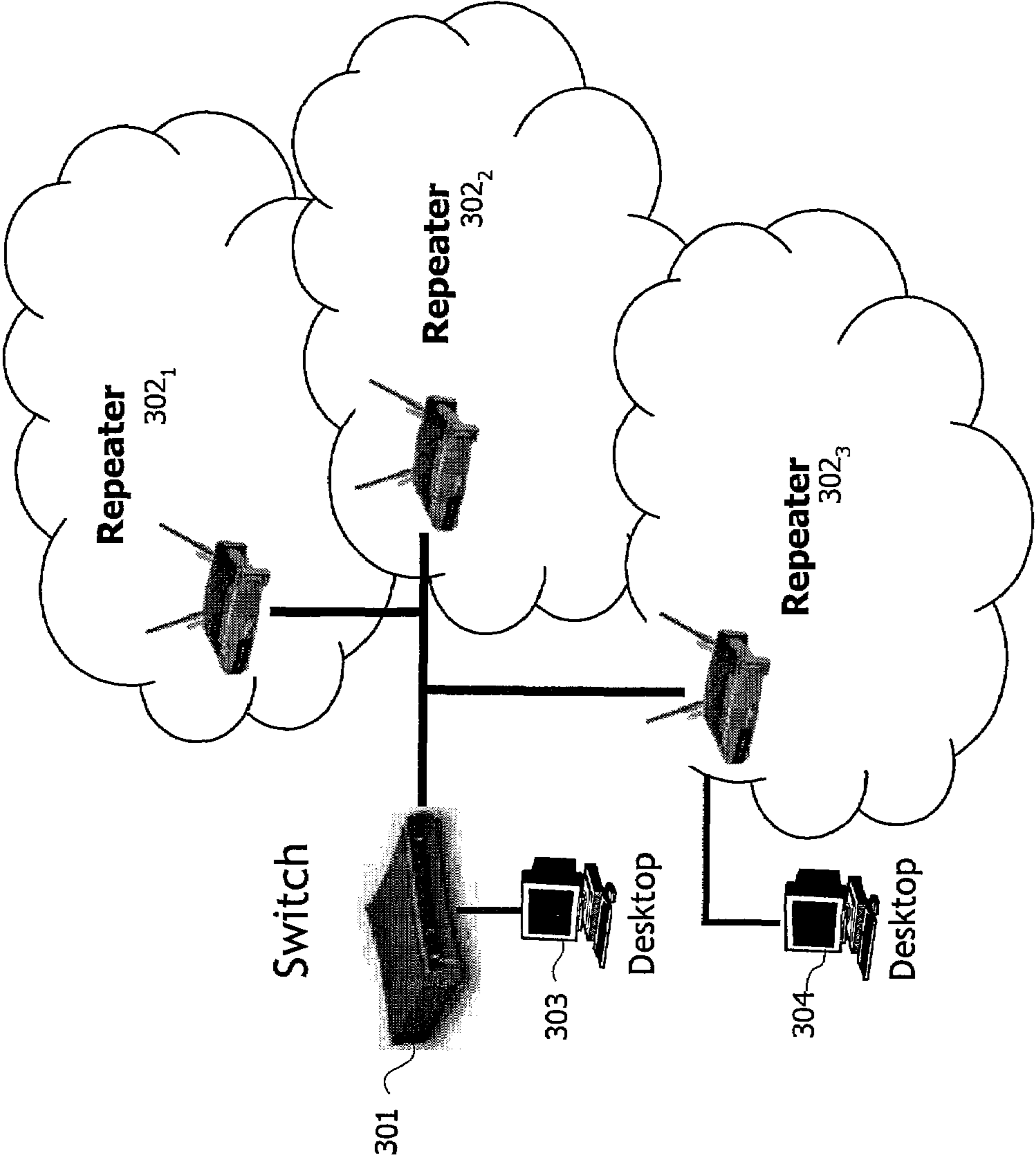


FIG. 3

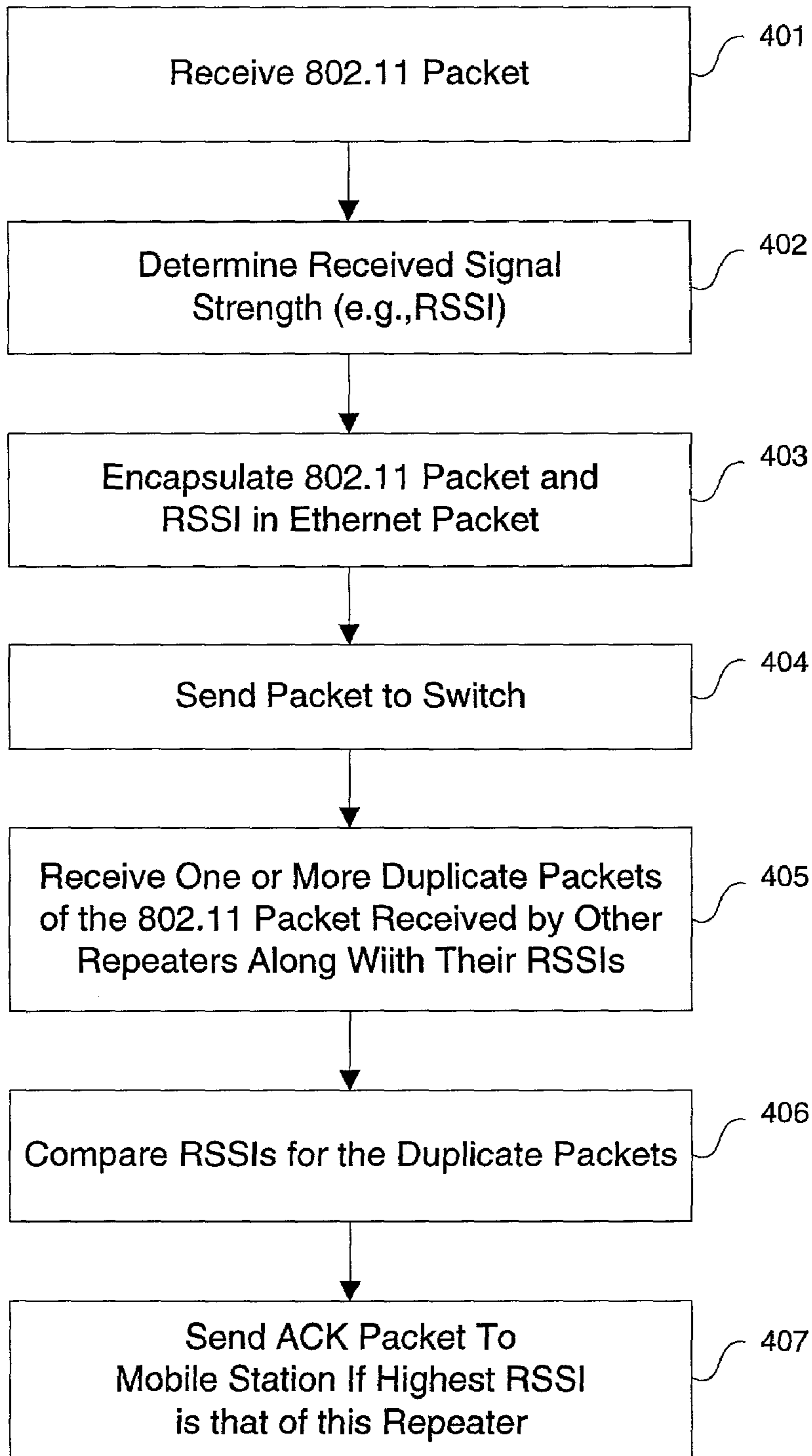


FIG. 4A

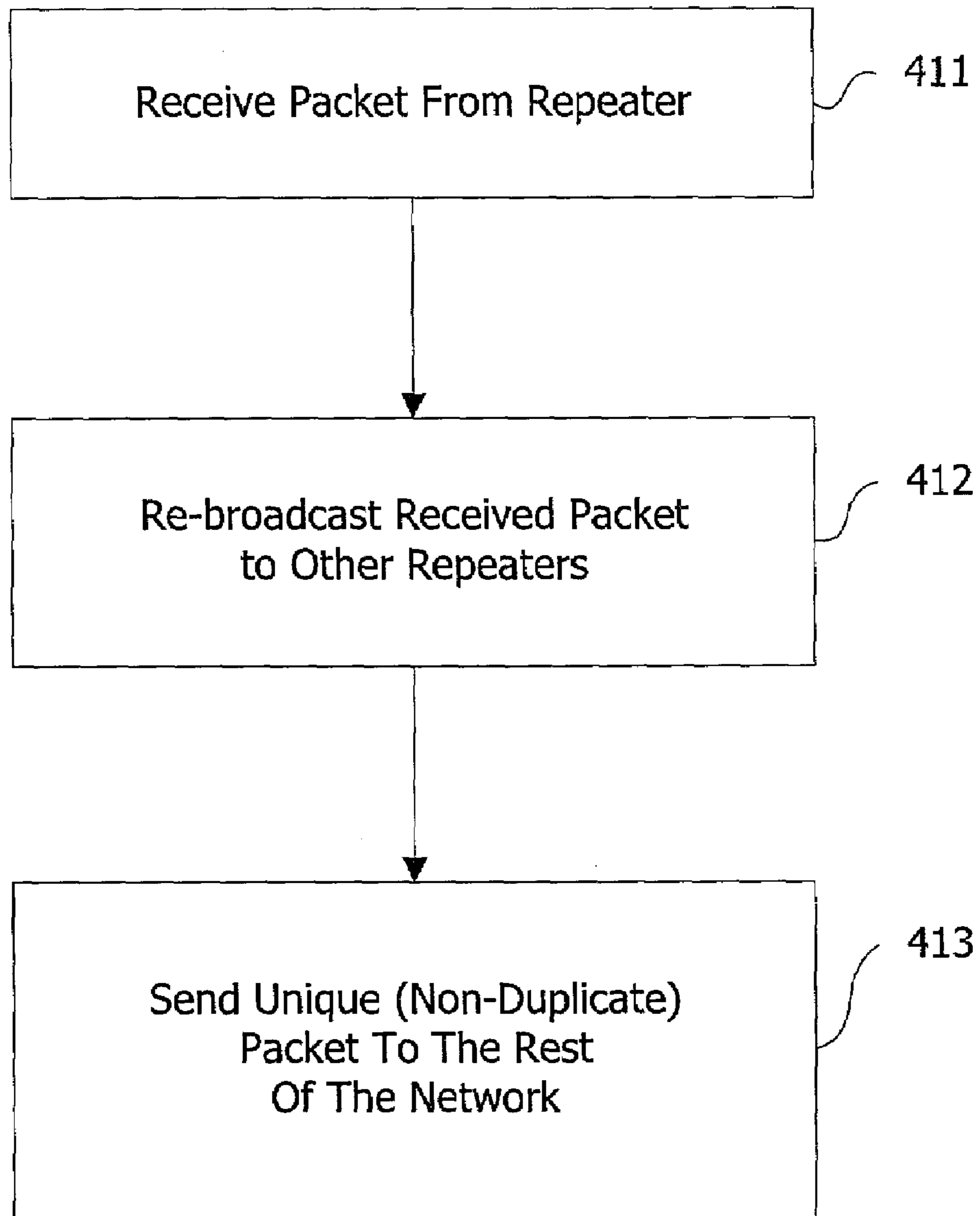


FIG. 4B

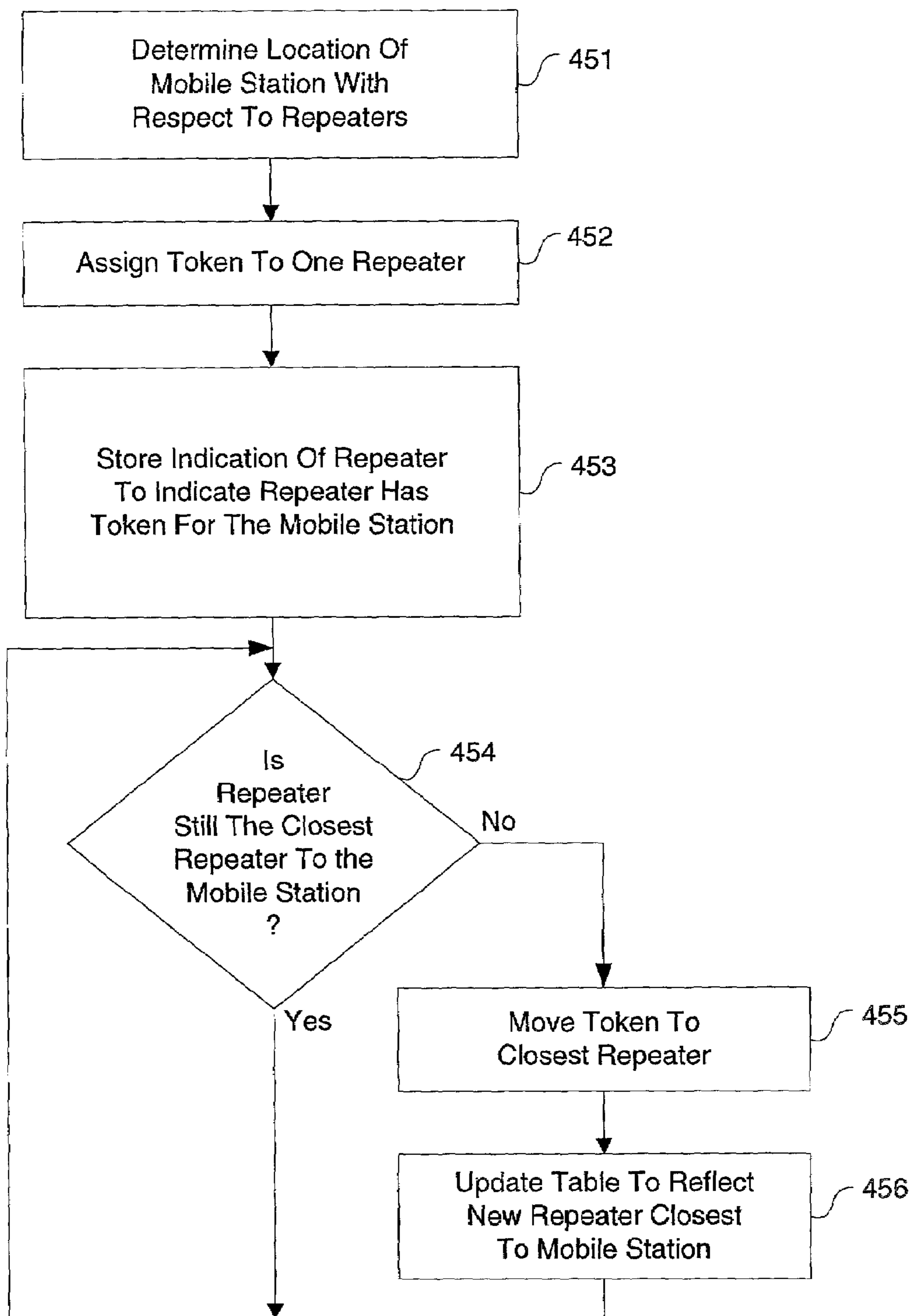


FIG. 4C

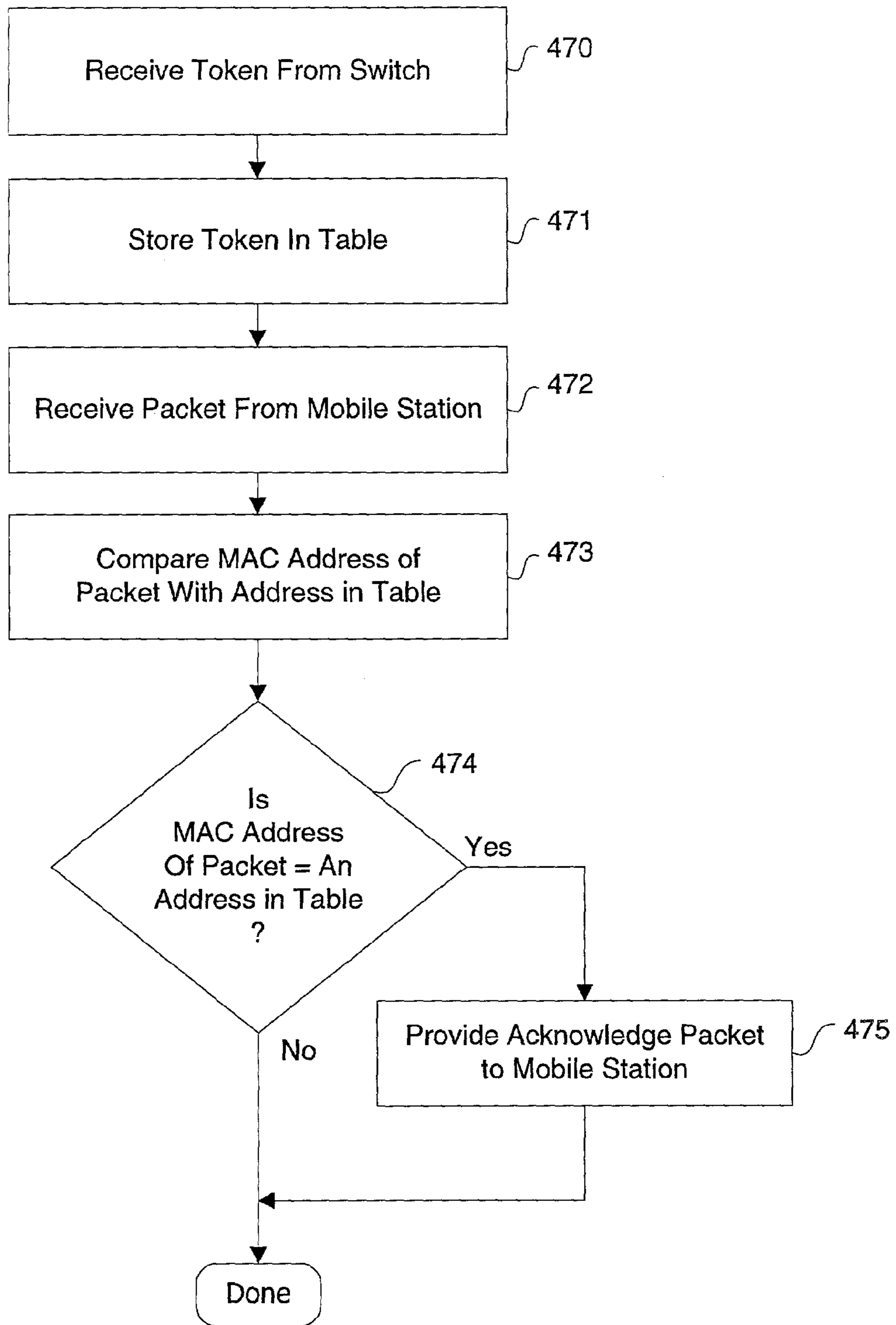


FIG. 4D

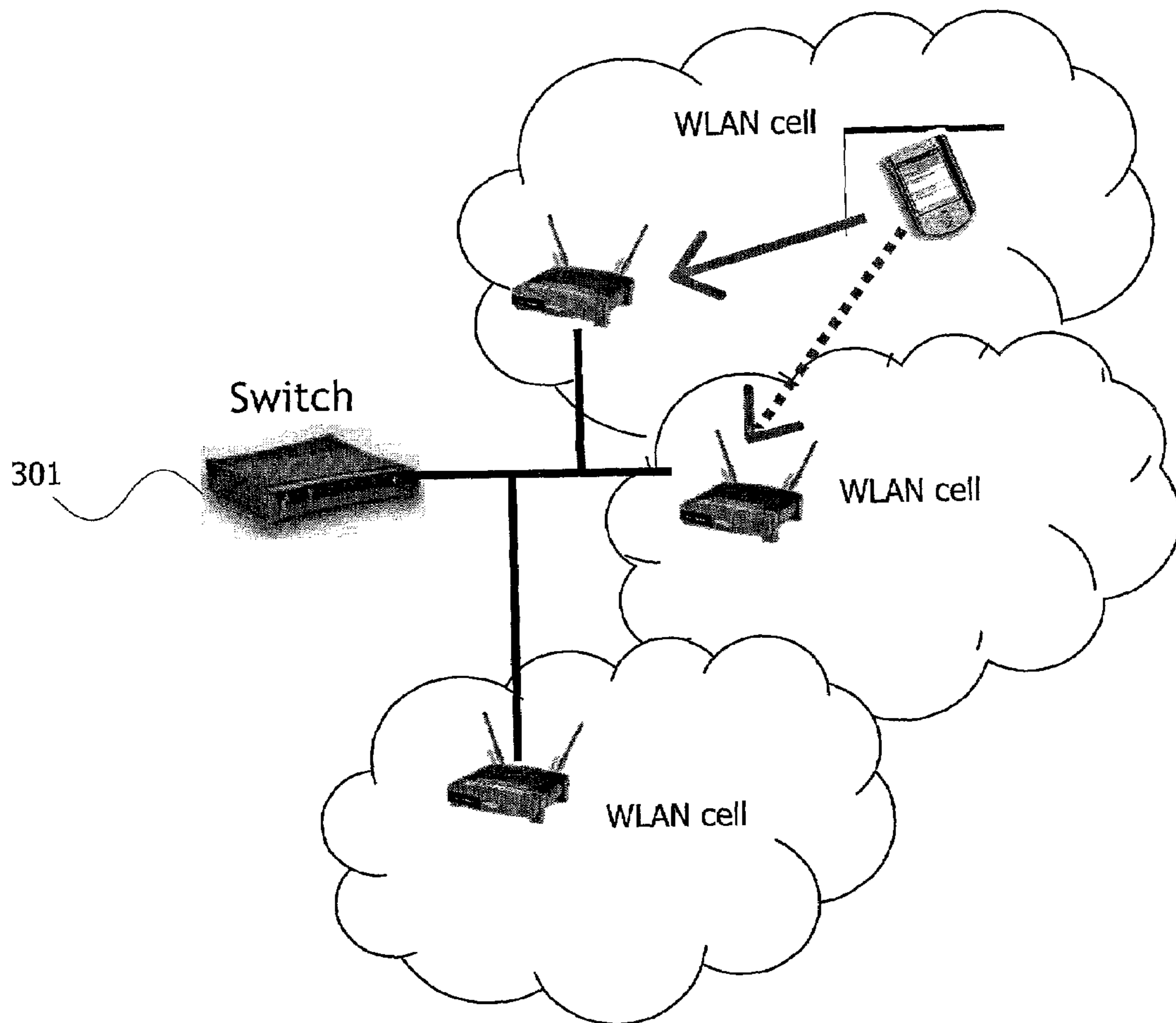


FIG. 5A

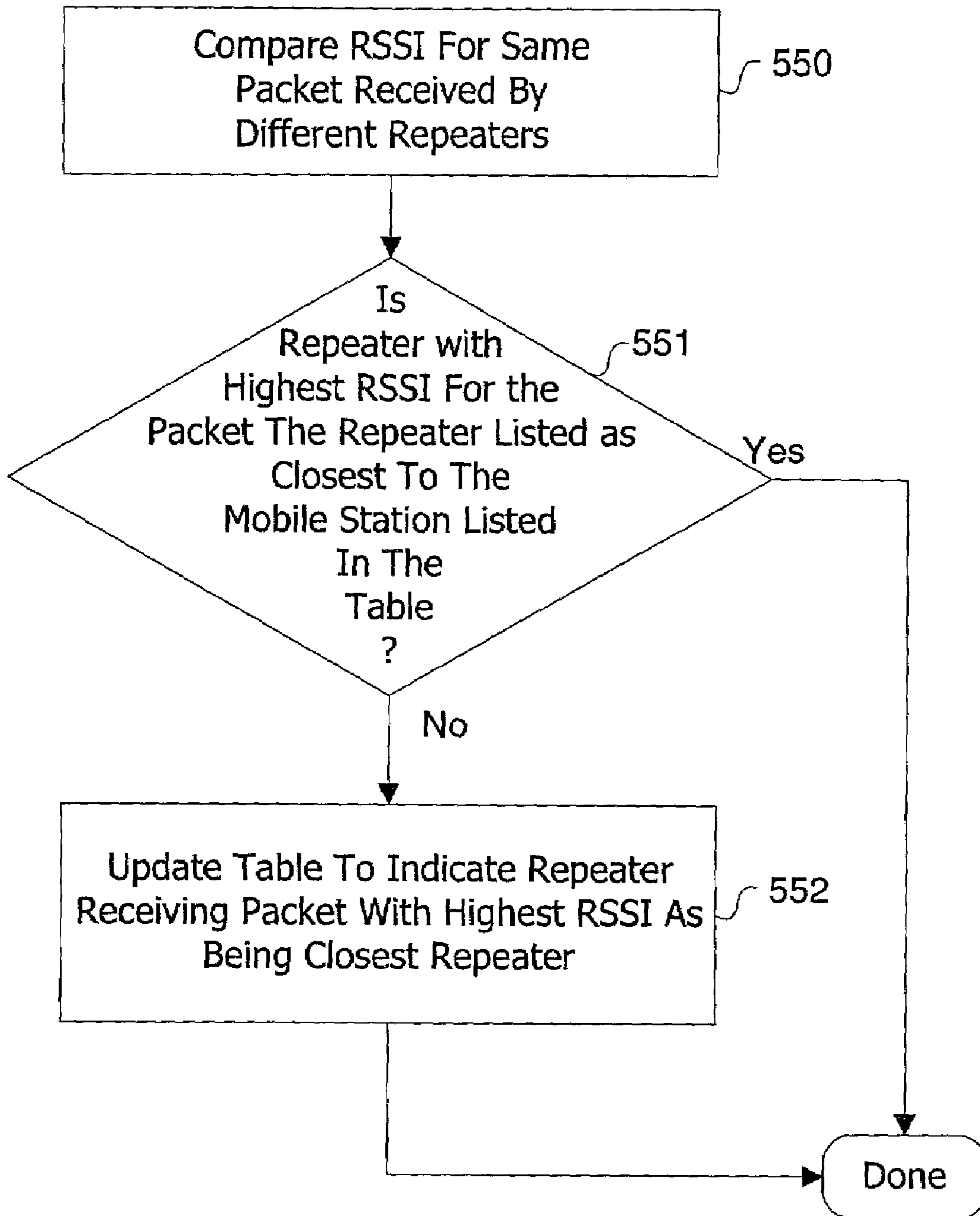


FIG. 5B

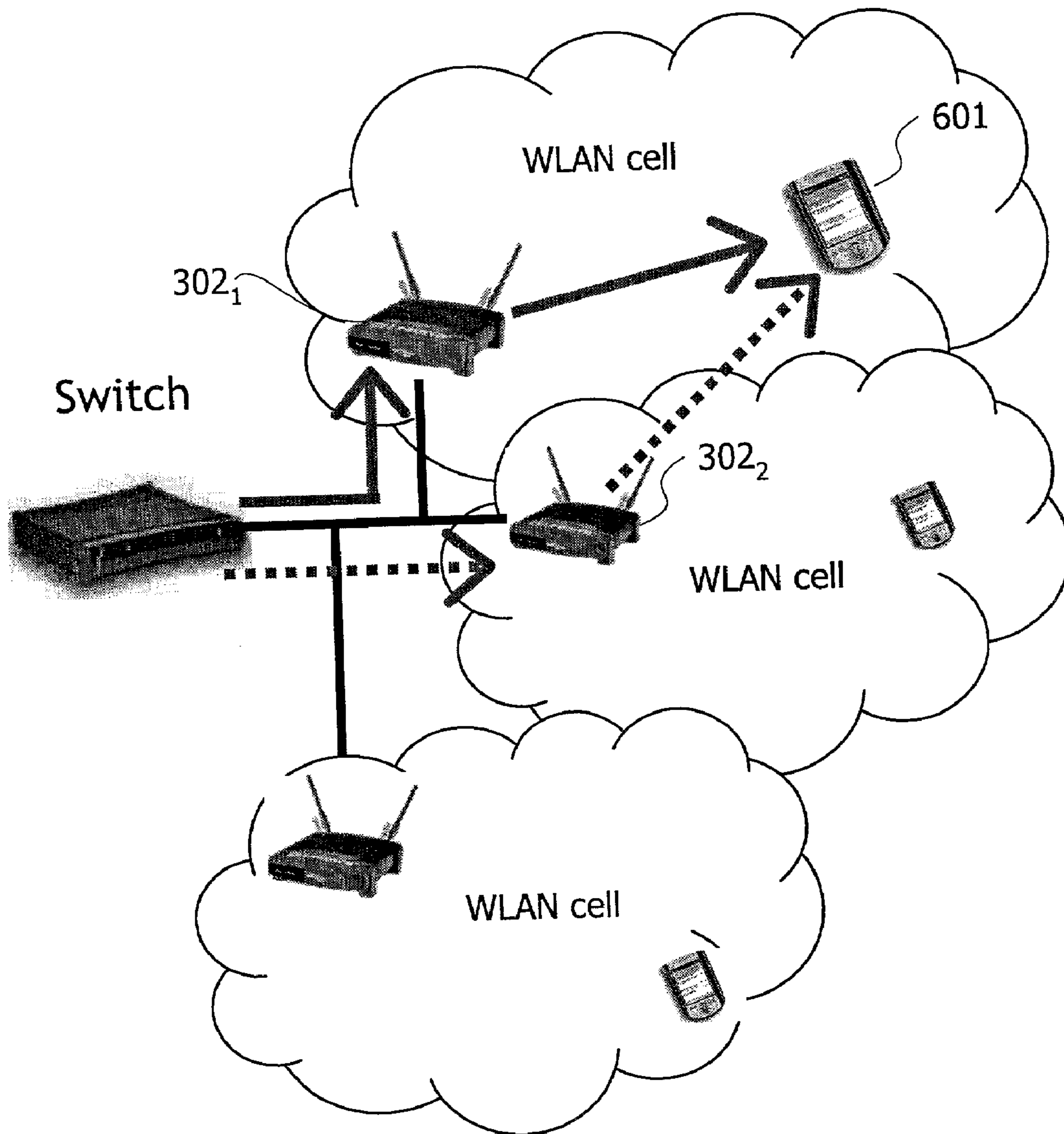


FIG. 6

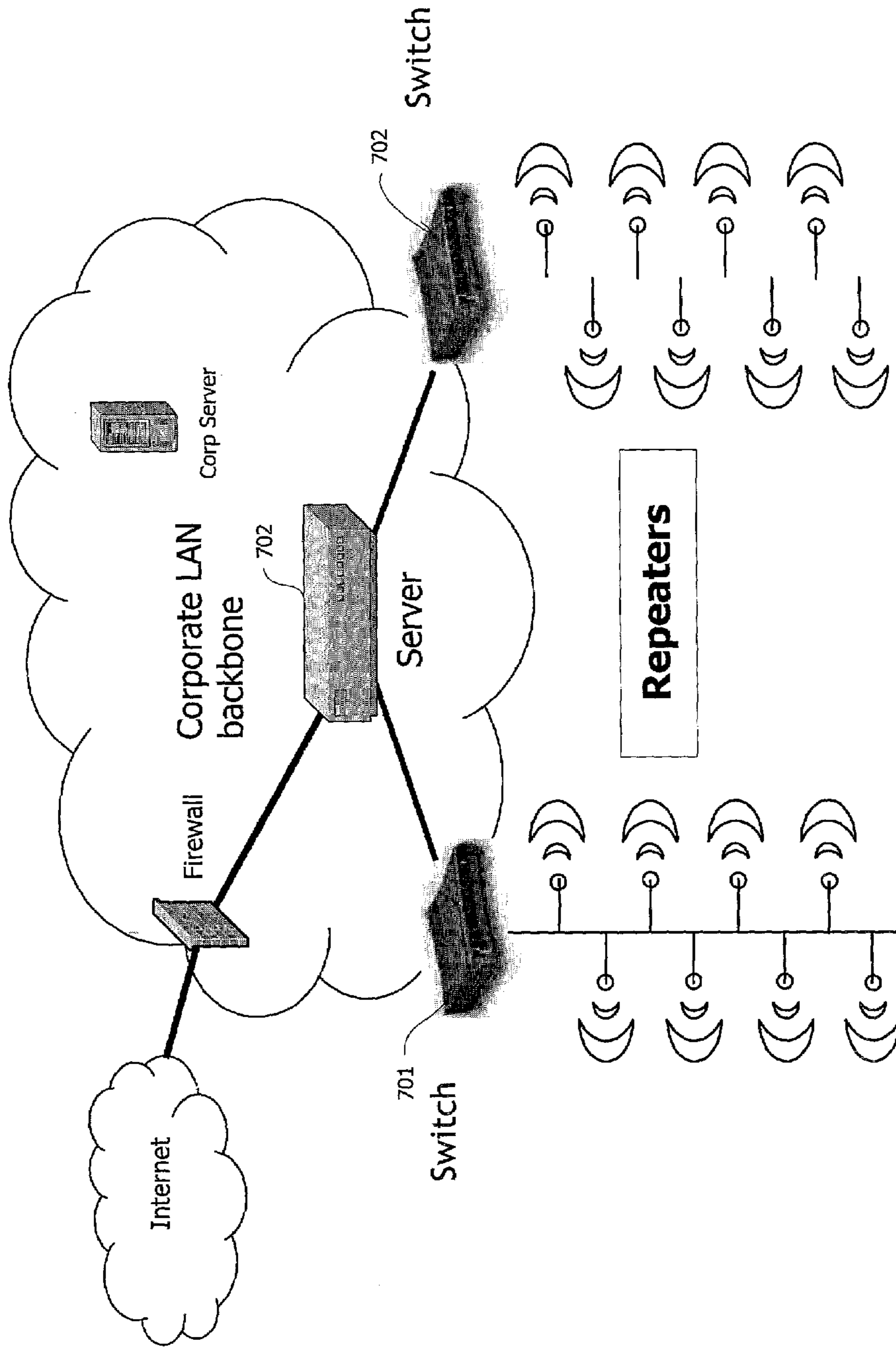


FIG. 7

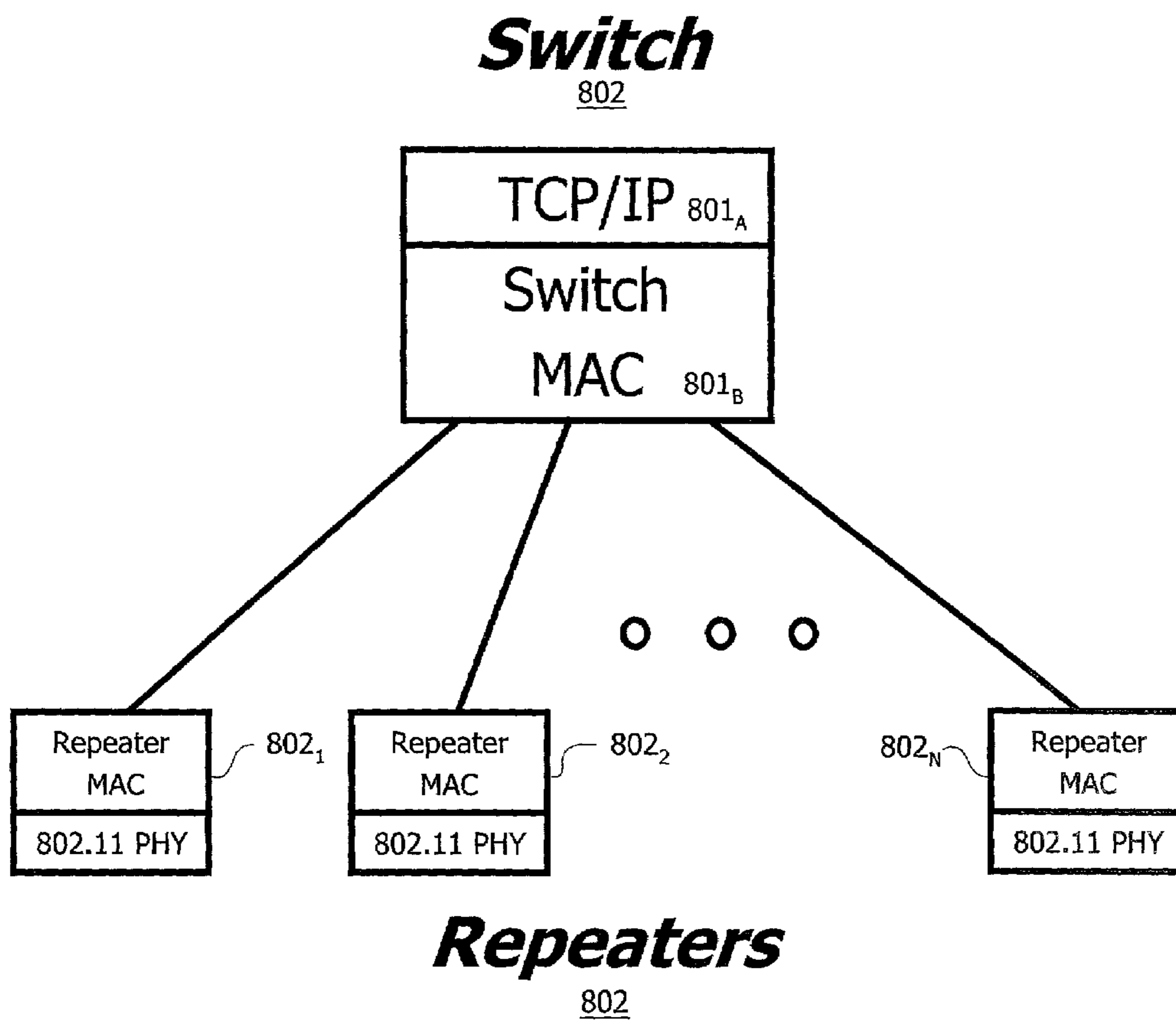


FIG. 8

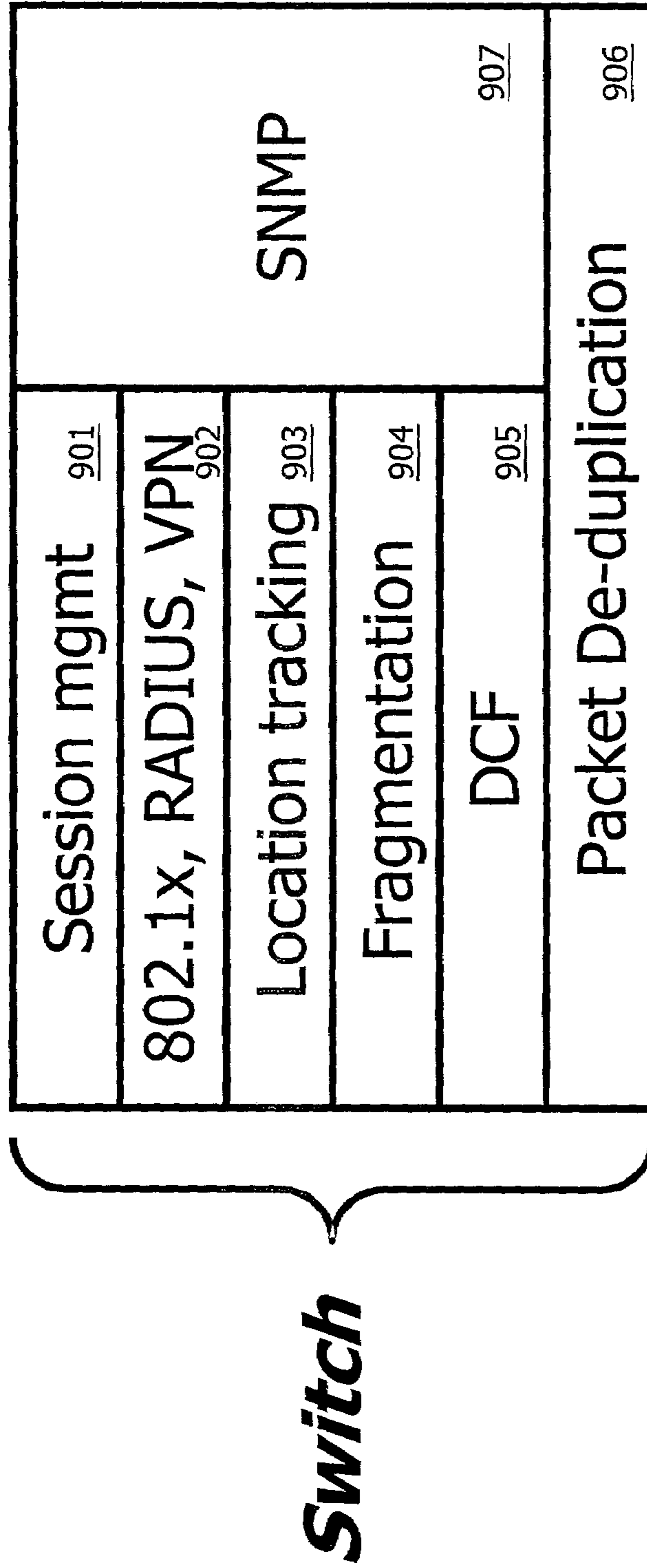
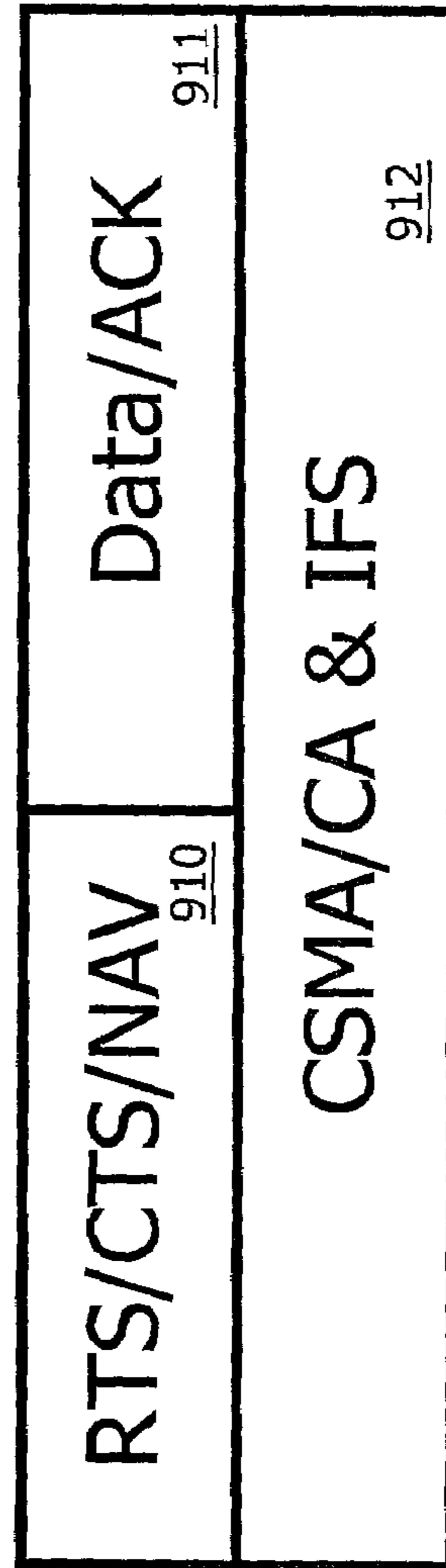


FIG. 9A



Repeater

FIG. 9B

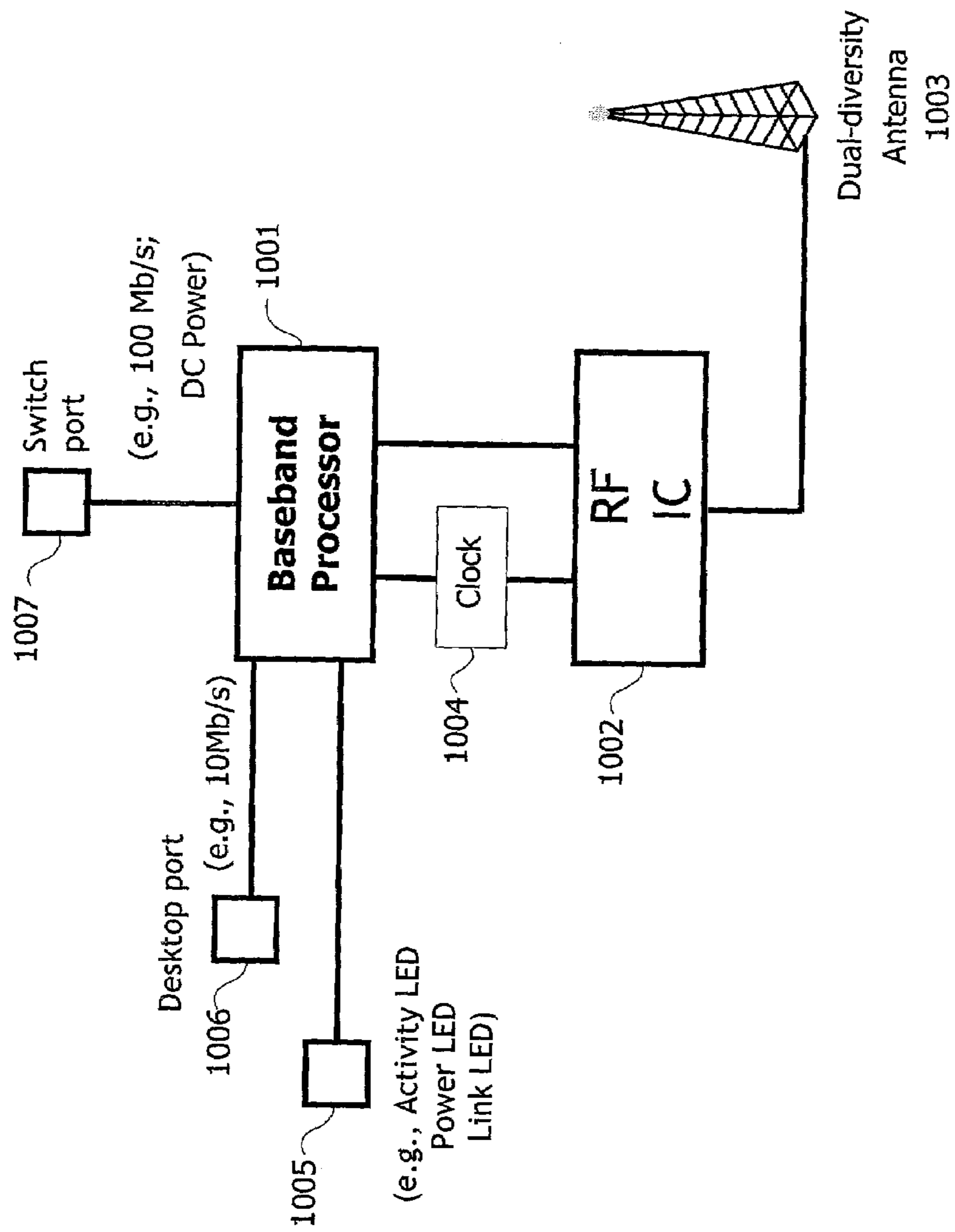


FIG. 10

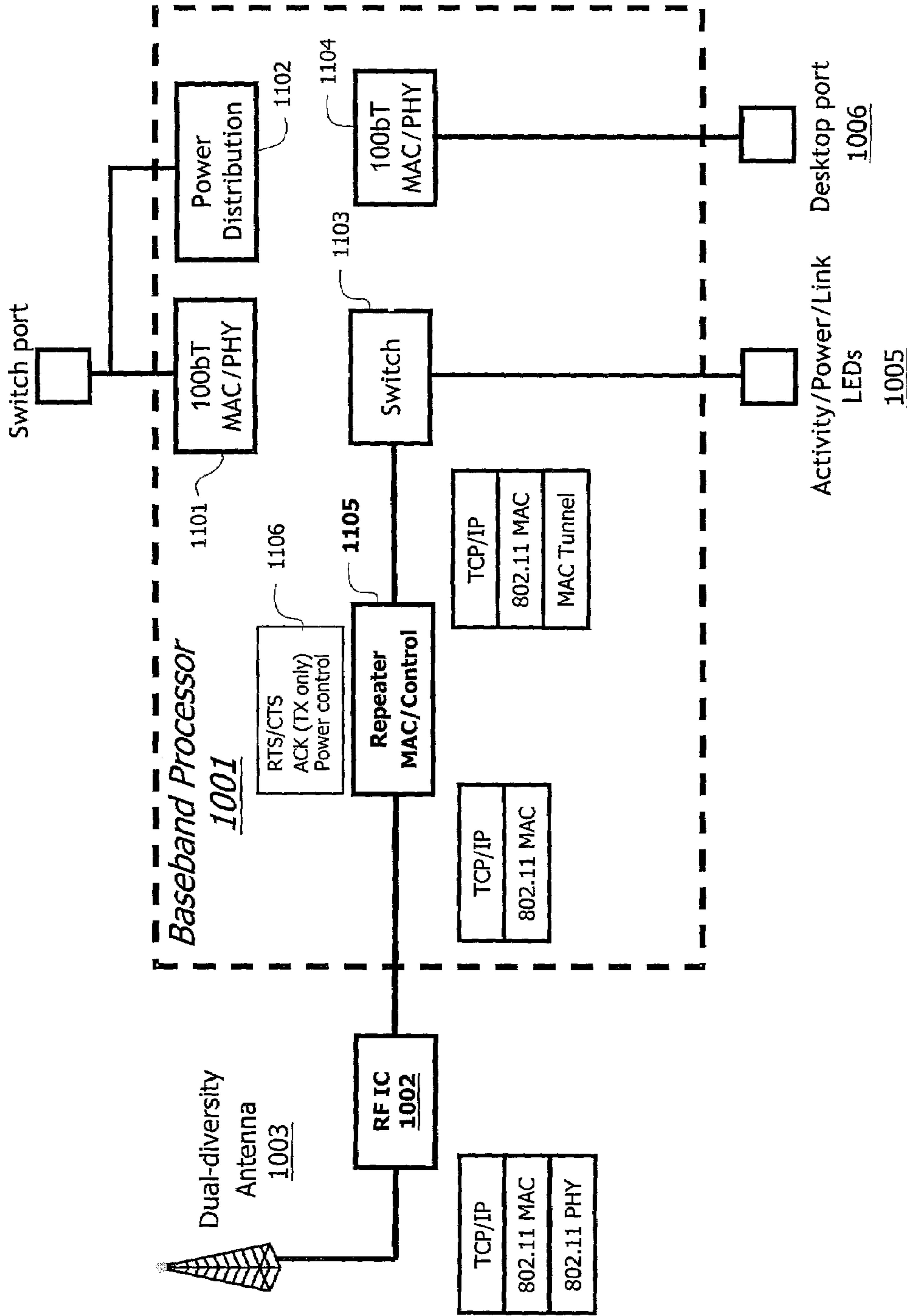


FIG. 11

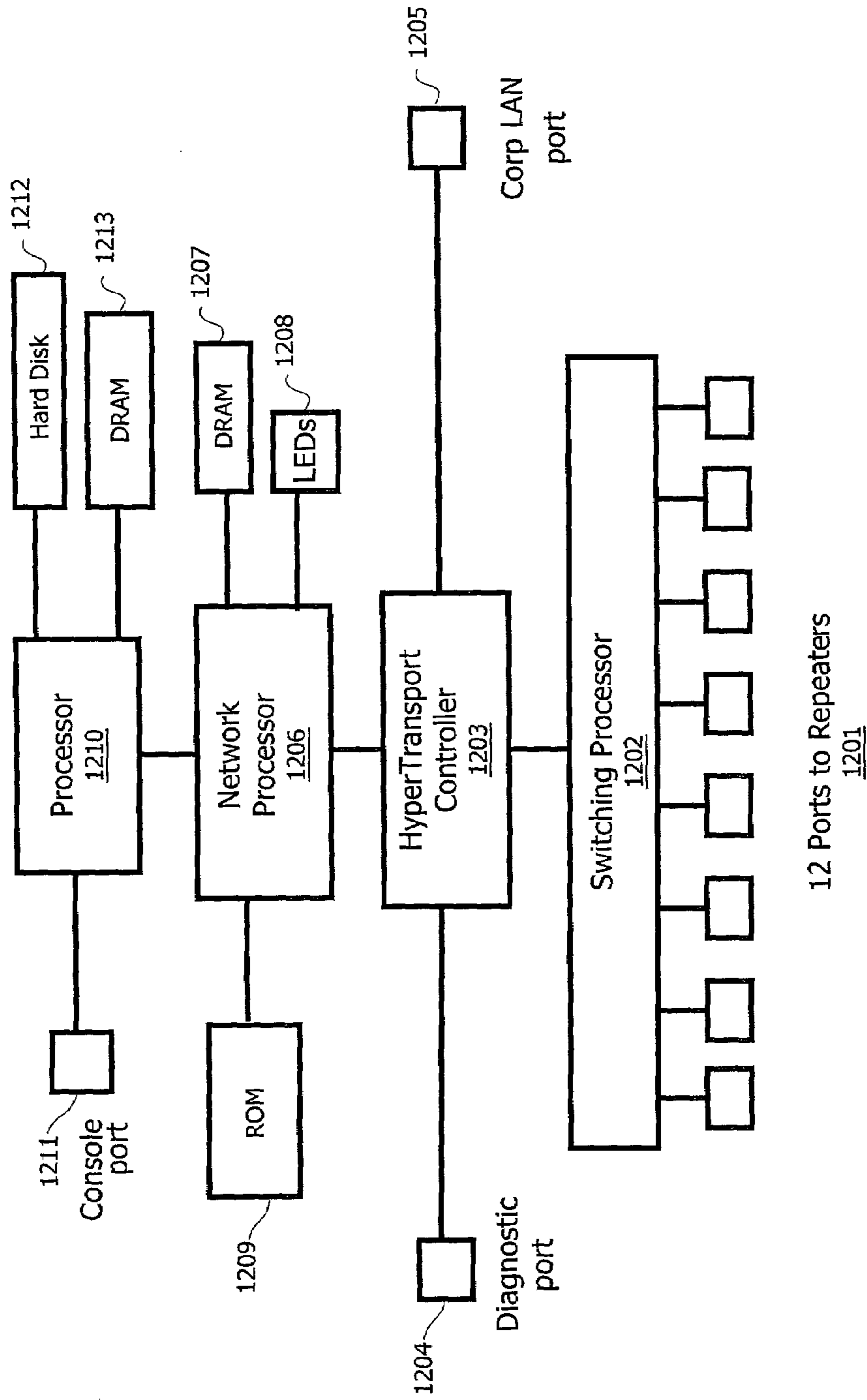


FIG. 12

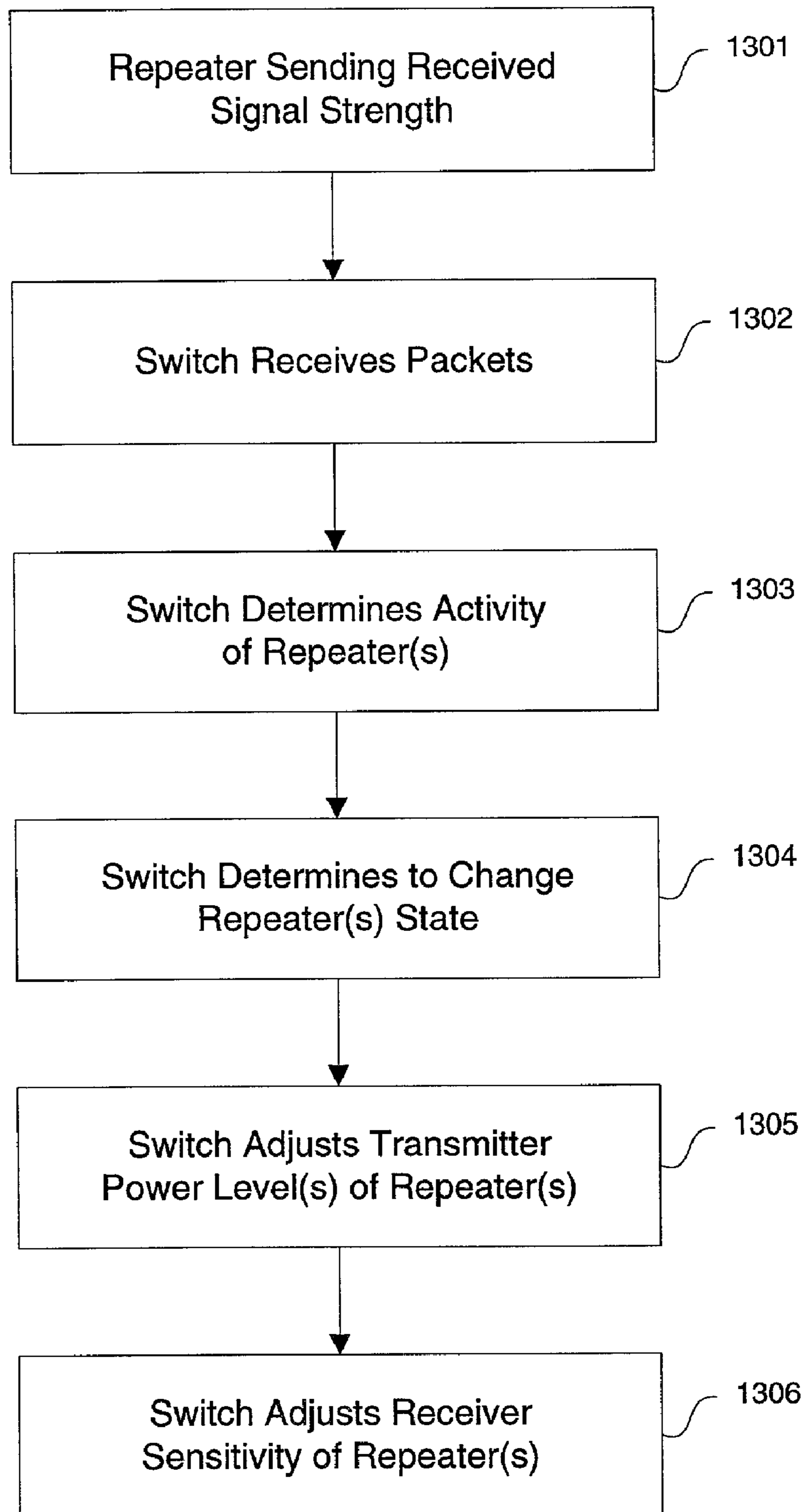


FIG. 13

1

RECONFIGURATION OF A
COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

PRIORITY

The present patent application is a continuation-in-part of, and claims priority to, U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/044,480, titled, "Receiver Diversity In A Communication System" filed on Jan. 11, 2002, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,760,318, issued Jul. 6, 2004.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to the field of wireless communications; more particularly, the present invention relates to reconfiguration of a wireless communications system.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

FIG. 1 illustrates an exemplary network environment used today. Referring to FIG. 1, a corporate Local Area Network (LAN) backbone **102** interfaces to a number of desktop computers **103₁-103_n**, and may interface to Internet **101**. Corporate LAN backbone **102** may comprise a firewall **102A**, corporate server **102B**, and a standard Ethernet switch **102C**. Ethernet switch **102C** includes an interface by which desktops **103₁-103_n** are coupled to the corporate LAN backbone **102** and may access corporate sever **102B** and Internet **101** (via firewall **102A**).

More recently, Wireless LANs (WLANs) are being installed. Many of the recently implemented WLANs operate according to the protocol set forth in the 802.11 Standard, particularly as more enterprises are adopting the 802.11 Standard. ISO/IEC DIS 8802.11

FIG. 2 illustrates one embodiment of an 802.11 based WLAN (LAN) system. Referring to FIG. 2, the Internet or other LAN **201** is coupled to an 802.11 server **203** via firewall (FW) **202**. Server **203** communicates with mobile stations in a number of 802.11 cells **206₁-206_n**, using an access point in each of cells **206₁-206_n**, such as access point **204**. Server **203** is coupled to access points such as access point **204**, via an Ethernet connection. There is one access point for each of the 802.11 cells **206₁-206_n**. Mobile stations in each of the 802.11 cells, such as laptops **205₁** and **205₂** in cell **206₁**, communicate wirelessly with the access points via the 802.11 protocol. The communications from mobile stations in the 802.11 cells to the access points are forwarded through to server **203** and potentially to Internet/LAN **201**, while communications from Internet/LAN **201** are forwarded through server **203** to the mobile stations via the access points.

There are a number of problems associated with the current implementations of 802.11 networks. For example, there are a number of mobility problems associated with the current 802.11 network deployments. For example, the 802.11 standard sets forth a number of solutions to handle the issue of mobility of mobile stations between the 802.11 cells. However, these schemes do not work effectively as there is no standard solution in place and users haven't indicated a desire for long-term proprietary solutions.

Furthermore, in order to set up an 802.11 network such as shown in FIG. 2, a site survey is required in order to determine where each of the access points are placed to ensure that the 802.11 cells provide complete coverage over a particular geographic area. This may be costly. Also, the cost of each of the access points is approximately \$500.00. Generally, such a high cost is a deterrent to having a large number of access points. However, by reducing the number of access points, coverage diminishes and the 802.11 network is less effective.

2

Moreover, once the site survey has been performed, the configuration of the access points only provides effective coverage while conditions that existed at the time of the site survey remain the same. However, the conditions of the network at the time the site survey is performed may change when the network is being used. A change in conditions may occur in part because the electromagnetic interference varies during different times of the day. This may result in a network configuration being set up that cannot support the traffic load or that has more capacity than is typically used.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A communication system and method are described. In one embodiment, the method comprises a switch receiving information from at least one repeater for each packet received without errors by the at least one repeater, the switch, in response to the information, determining an amount of wireless communication activity each of the at least one repeater is experiencing, the switch determining whether to cause one or more repeaters to change status regarding wireless reception and transmission of packets from other devices in the network based on repeater location and repeater density and the information received from the at least one repeater, and the switch causing a change in the status for at least one of the one or more repeaters by signaling to the at least one of the one or more repeaters.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present invention will be understood more fully from the detailed description given below and from the accompanying drawings of various embodiments of the invention, which, however, should not be taken to limit the invention to the specific embodiments, but are for explanation and understanding only.

FIG. 1 illustrates an exemplary network environment used today.

FIG. 2 illustrates one embodiment of an 802.11 based wireless LAN-based (LAN) system.

FIG. 3 illustrates one embodiment of a network architecture.

FIG. 4A is a flow diagram of one embodiment of a receiver diversity processing performed by a repeater.

FIG. 4B is a flow diagram of one embodiment of a receiver diversity processing performed by a switch.

FIG. 4C is a process for managing repeaters using a token-based mechanism.

FIG. 4D is one embodiment of a token-based process for handling packets.

FIG. 5A illustrates one technique for location tracking by RSSI.

FIG. 5B is a flow diagram of one embodiment of a process for performing location tracking by a switch.

FIG. 6 illustrates mobility supported by routing.

FIG. 7 illustrates one embodiment of a network system.

FIG. 8 illustrates one embodiment of a protocol architecture.

FIG. 9A illustrates one embodiment of a rotation tracking system.

FIG. 9B illustrates one embodiment of a repeater.

FIG. 10 illustrates one embodiment of a hardware architecture for a repeater.

FIG. 11 is a block diagram of one embodiment of the base band processor of a repeater.

FIG. 12 is a block diagram of one embodiment of a switch.

FIG. 13 is a flow diagram of one embodiment of a process for reconfiguring the wireless communication system.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PRESENT INVENTION

A communication system is described. In one embodiment, the communication system comprises a mobile station having a transmitter to transmit packets wirelessly according to a protocol and multiple repeaters communicably coupled with the mobile station. Each of the plurality of repeaters receives one or more packets of the wirelessly transmitted packets from the mobile station. Each of the repeaters receives an indication of which of the wirelessly transmitted packets were received without errors by other repeaters and a received signal strength for those packets. The communication system also includes a switch coupled to the repeaters. Each of the repeaters forwards to the switch each packet of the wirelessly transmitted packets that each repeater had received at a received signal strength higher than any other repeater.

In the following description, numerous details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the present invention. It will be apparent, however, to one skilled in the art, that the present invention may be practiced without these specific details. In other instances, well-known structures and devices are shown in block diagram form, rather than in detail, in order to avoid obscuring the present invention.

Some portions of the detailed descriptions which follow are presented in terms of algorithms and symbolic representations of operations on data bits within a computer memory. These algorithmic descriptions and representations are the means used by those skilled in the data processing arts to most effectively convey the substance of their work to others skilled in the art. An algorithm is here, and generally, conceived to be a self-consistent sequence of steps leading to a desired result. The steps are those requiring physical manipulations of physical quantities. Usually, though not necessarily, these quantities take the form of electrical or magnetic signals capable of being stored, transferred, combined, compared, and otherwise manipulated. It has proven convenient at times, principally for reasons of common usage, to refer to these signals as bits, values, elements, symbols, characters, terms, numbers, or the like.

It should be borne in mind, however, that all of these and similar terms are to be associated with the appropriate physical quantities and are merely convenient labels applied to these quantities. Unless specifically stated otherwise as apparent from the following discussion, it is appreciated that throughout the description, discussions utilizing terms such as "processing" or "computing" or "calculating" or "determining" or "displaying" or the like, refer to the action and processes of a computer system, or similar electronic computing device, that manipulates and transforms data represented as physical (electronic) quantities within the computer system's registers and memories into other data similarly represented as physical quantities within the computer system memories or registers or other such information storage, transmission or display devices.

The present invention also relates to apparatus for performing the operations herein. This apparatus may be specially constructed for the required purposes, or it may comprise a general purpose computer selectively activated or reconfigured by a computer program stored in the computer. Such a computer program may be stored in a computer readable storage medium, such as, but is not limited to, any type of disk including floppy disks, optical disks, CD-ROMs, and magnetic-optical disks, read-only memories (ROMs), random

access memories (RAMs), EPROMs, EEPROMs, magnetic or optical cards, or any type of media suitable for storing electronic instructions, and each coupled to a computer system bus.

The algorithms and displays presented herein are not inherently related to any particular computer or other apparatus. Various general purpose systems may be used with programs in accordance with the teachings herein, or it may prove convenient to construct more specialized apparatus to perform the required method steps. The required structure for a variety of these systems will appear from the description below. In addition, the present invention is not described with reference to any particular programming language. It will be appreciated that a variety of programming languages may be used to implement the teachings of the invention as described herein.

A machine-readable medium includes any mechanism for storing or transmitting information in a form readable by a machine (e.g., a computer). For example, a machine-readable medium includes read only memory ("ROM"); random access memory ("RAM"); magnetic disk storage media; optical storage media; flash memory devices; electrical, optical, acoustical or other form of propagated signals (e.g., carrier waves, infrared signals, digital signals, etc.); etc.

Exemplary Network Architecture

FIG. 3 illustrates one embodiment of a network architecture. Referring to FIG. 3, a LAN backbone 102 interfaces a number of desktops 103₁-103_n to Internet 101. Note that the present invention does not require that a LAN backbone be included. All that is necessary is that there be a communication mechanism that is capable of receiving packets from other devices and/or sending packets to other devices.

Similar to FIG. 1, LAN backbone 102 includes firewall 102A, corporate server 102B and Ethernet switch 102C. However, in contrast to FIG. 1, LAN backbone 102 also includes switch 301 which interfaces to repeaters 302₁-302₃. Although only three repeaters are shown, alternative embodiments may utilize any number of repeaters with a minimum of one. In one embodiment, switch 301 is coupled to repeaters 302₁-302₃ via a wired connection, such as cabling. In one embodiment, the wired connection may comprise CAT5 cabling.

Each of the repeaters 302₁-302₃ receives wireless communications from devices (e.g., mobile stations such as, for example, a mobile phone, a cellular phone, a cordless phone, a headset, a voice-enabled mobile station, a laptop computer system, a personal digital assistant, a computer-data-enabled mobile station, a speakerphone, video game controller, a DVD controller, a stereo controller, a TV controller, etc.) in the coverage areas of the repeaters. In one embodiment, these wireless communications are performed according to the 802.11 protocol. That is, each of the mobile stations in each of cells 310₁-310_n exchanges packets with the repeaters 302₁-302₃ using the 802.11 protocol.

In one embodiment, switch 301 includes 802.11 MAC protocol software that allows switch 301 to communicate with repeaters 302₁-302₃. Different from the prior art, many of the 802.11 MAC functionality typically associated with the access points, as described above in the Background section, are taken out of the repeaters 302₁-302_n and centralized in switch 301. More specifically, the MAC layer is split to enable transfer of messages over wiring (e.g., CAT5 cabling). As such, repeaters 302₁-302₃ and switch 301 are interfaced at the inside the 802.11 MAC layer as described below.

In one embodiment, switch 301 includes one or more Ethernet connectors (e.g., external Ethernet connector) so that a

computer system, such as desktop computer system **303**, or other device, has an Ethernet connection to LAN backbone **102** via switch **301**. Similarly, in one embodiment, one or more of repeaters **302₁-302₃** includes an Ethernet connector to enable a device (e.g., computer system, such as desktop computer system **304**) to gain access, via a repeater, such as repeater **302₃**, to switch **301** and the rest of the communication system. In such a case, the wiring coupling switch **301** to repeaters **302₁-302₃** may combine 802.11 information including management and control (as opposed to solely data) information with traditional Ethernet packets on the same wiring (e.g., CAT5).

Distributed Receiver Diversity Approach

The network architecture described above allows for overlapping coverage between cells supported by the repeaters. This overlapping coverage allows for receiver diversity.

The packets from the mobile stations in each of the cells are broadcast and may be received by multiple repeaters. By allowing multiple repeaters to receive packets from one of the mobile stations, collisions and dropped packets may be reduced or avoided. For example, if a collision occurs or if a packet is dropped by one of the repeaters, then a particular packet can still be received by other repeaters. In this manner, the use of repeaters described herein provides for higher reliability.

In an embodiment in which mobile stations exchange packets with repeaters using the 802.11 protocol, each packet from a mobile station includes an Ethernet MAC address, which is embedded in the packet. Each packet may be received by one or more repeaters. Each repeater that receives a packet from a mobile station without errors (i.e., cleanly) determines the received signal strength of the packet in a manner well-known in the art. The received signal strength is converted into an indication, such as a received signal strength indicator (RSSI). The repeater forwards the packet, along with the RSSI. In one embodiment, the repeater encapsulates the packet into an Ethernet packet with the RSSI in a header and forwards the Ethernet packet to switch **301**. In one embodiment, the RSSI is specified in a value from 1 to 127. These 128 discrete values can be mapped to dB signal strength values based on the particular implementation being used. Thus, all packets received from mobile stations by a repeater without errors are forwarded to switch **301**. Switch **301** knows which repeater sent the packet(s) because it is received on its preassigned port.

In one embodiment, the fact that a particular repeater received a packet without errors is communicated to all other repeaters. In one embodiment, this is accomplished by having the repeater send each encapsulated packet and its RSSI as a broadcast packet to switch **301**. This broadcast packet is similar to those broadcast packets used in Ethernet and includes a special broadcast address, which is recognized by switch **301**. In another embodiment, only the header of the packet, which includes the RSSI and uniquely identifies the packet, is encapsulated and sent as a broadcast packet to the other repeaters. In this case, the data portion of the packet is not forwarded.

In response to receiving the broadcast packet with the specific broadcast address, switch **301** broadcasts the packet on all of the other ports used for communication between switch **301** and the other repeaters.

In one embodiment, upon receiving a packet without error from a particular mobile station, the repeater sets a timer within which it is to receive packets received by other repeaters that are duplicates to the packet it has already received.

When the timer expires, the repeater examines the RSSI of the packet it received (without error) with the RSSI values of duplicate packets received by other repeaters. Based on that information, the repeater determines if it is to send the acknowledgement packet. Thus, if the time expires without receiving a duplicate packet, the repeater sends the acknowledgement. If the timer expires and the repeater receives a duplicate packet, thereafter, it is treated as a new packet. To avoid this, the timer time out value is set to handle the worst case time delay that a repeater may face in receiving duplicate packets.

Note that switch **301** forwards each packet received from repeaters (note duplicates) to the rest of the communication system (e.g., LAN backbone, other mobile stations, the Internet, etc.). In one embodiment, this occurs after de-duplication of packets so that only one copy of each packet is forwarded.

Once the broadcast packets have been received, all the repeaters know what packets were received cleanly by the others and at what RSSI the packets were received by the other repeaters. Thereafter, each repeater selects the packet with the highest RSSI and determines the repeater that received it. In other words, each repeater performs a comparison on the received signal strength of the packets it received that were also received by one or more other repeaters. For each of the packets that a repeater receives at a power level higher than any of the other repeaters that received that packet, that repeater sends an acknowledgement back to the mobile station acknowledging that the packet was received without errors. This prevents all the repeaters that receive the packet cleanly from sending multiple acknowledgements to mobile station.

In one embodiment, if two repeaters have the same receive signal strength for a packet, the repeater with the lower port number (the port number by which switch **301** is coupled to the repeater) is the repeater that is elected to send the acknowledgement to the mobile station. In this manner, only one repeater is selected to send the acknowledgement to the mobile station and, thus, the receiver diversity is handled in the network architecture in a distributed fashion. In one embodiment, to enable the repeaters to determine which is to send the acknowledgement in case of a packet received with the same received signal strength by multiple repeaters, each packet includes identification information, such as its switch port number, to enable the determination of which has the lowest port number. Note, in an alternative embodiment, the repeater with the highest port number may be the one to send the acknowledgement or other pre-assigned priority information may be used by the repeaters in such situations.

FIG. 4A is a flow diagram of one embodiment of a receiver diversity process performed by a repeater. The process is performed by processing logic that may comprise hardware (circuitry, dedicated logic, etc.), software (such as is run on a general purpose computer system or a dedicated machine), or a combination of both.

Referring to FIG. 4A, processing logic initially receives a 802.11 packet (processing block **401**). In response to the 802.11 packet, processing logic determines the received signal strength (e.g., RSSI) (processing block **402**). In one embodiment, this processing logic comprises a hardware mechanism, such as a radio frequency (RF) device (e.g., integrated circuit (e.g., RF IC **1002** in FIG. 10)) in the repeater. In such a case, the RF device sends the RSSI to a baseband processor in the repeater.

Thereafter, processing logic encapsulates 802.11 packet and RSSI in an Ethernet packet (processing block **403**) and sends the Ethernet packet to the switch (processing block **404**). In one embodiment, a baseband processor (e.g., base-

band processor **1001** in FIG. **10**) performs the encapsulation and sends the Ethernet packet to the switch.

Later in time, processing logic receives one or more packets from the switch that are duplicates of the 802.11 packet. These duplicate packets are transmitted by other repeaters and encapsulated by those repeaters, along with their RSSIs (processing block **405**). Processing logic in the repeater compares RSSIs for the duplicate packets (processing block **406**). In one embodiment, a baseband processor (e.g., baseband processor **1001** in FIG. **10**) performs the comparison. If the repeater determines it received the 802.11 packet with the highest RSSI, then processing logic sends the acknowledgment packet to the mobile station (processing block **407**).

FIG. **4B** is a flow diagram of one embodiment of a receiver diversity processing performed by a switch. The process is performed by processing logic that may comprise hardware (circuitry, dedicated logic, etc.), software (such as is run on a general purpose computer system or a dedicated machine), or a combination of both.

Referring to FIG. **4B**, processing logic initially receives a packet from a repeater (processing block **411**). In response to the packet, processing logic determines that the packet is to be sent to the other repeaters and re-broadcasts the received packet to other repeaters (processing block **412**). Then processing logic sends only one copy of the packet to the rest of the network (processing block **413**).

Token-Based Receiver Diversity Approach

Note that the above receiver diversity procedure is particularly useful when gigabit or faster Ethernet communication exists between switch **301** and repeaters **302₁-302_n**. However, if such is not the case, another technique for receiver diversity may be utilized. For example, a token-based receiver diversity procedure may be used. In this case, switch **301** has a token for every mobile station on the 802.11 network and it gives the token to one of the repeaters. In other words, switch **301** pre-assigns the token before a packet is even transmitted by a mobile station. The repeater stores the token in a table that lists all mobile stations for which it has a token. The repeater with the token sends the acknowledgement packet to the mobile stations listed in the table when those mobile stations send packets that are received by the repeater. Therefore, a comparison of received signal strengths for duplicate packets is not necessary. Note that this token based mechanism, if the repeater with the token does not receive a packet cleanly, but another repeater does, that packet will be forwarded to the switch and not acknowledged to the mobile client. However, the switch moves the token before a subsequent packet is sent by mobile station. Therefore, this will only occur for one packet.

In one embodiment, switch **301** includes a database with a listing of mobile stations and repeater numbers corresponding to the repeater that has been designated to acknowledge packets received from the mobile station and, thus, has the token. The table may also include additional information describing the repeater itself.

Since switch **301** receives all packets and their received signal strength, switch **301** can determine the closest repeater to a particular mobile station. If the repeater determined to be closest to the particular mobile station is different than the one previously identified as closest, then switch **301** moves the token to a new repeater, i.e. the one that is closer to the mobile station. The token may be moved on a packet-by-packet basis or every predetermined number of the packets (e.g., 10 packets, 100 packets, etc.).

Switch **301** may employ a timer to indicate the time during which duplicate packets may be received in much the same manner the timer is used by the repeaters in the distributed approach described above.

FIG. **4C** is a process for managing repeaters using a token-based mechanism. The process is performed by processing logic that may comprise hardware (circuitry, dedicated logic, etc.), software (such as is run on a general purpose computer system or a dedicated machine), or a combination of both.

Referring to FIG. **4C**, processing logic first determines the location of mobile stations with respect to repeaters (processing block **451**). Processing logic then assigns a token for each of the mobile stations to one of the repeaters (processing block **452**) and stores an indication of the repeater assigned to each mobile station (processing block **453**). This information is stored in a table in memory. In one embodiment, this table includes a listing of mobile stations and an indication of which repeater and/or switch port number is assigned to the mobile station. The table may be the same data structure used for location tracking described below.

In one embodiment, the switch assigns a token by sending an Add Token command to the repeater, which causes the repeater to add a new mobile station to its table of mobile devices that the repeater supports. This command includes the MAC address of the mobile station.

Subsequently, processing logic periodically tests whether the repeater assigned the token for a particular mobile station is still the closest repeater to that mobile station (processing block **454**). If so, then the processing is complete. If not, then processing logic moves the token to the closest repeater (processing block **455**) and updates the table to reflect the new repeater that is closest to the mobile station (processing block **456**). Processing logic also updates the switch port to reflect the new repeater for use when sending packets to the mobile station from the switch.

In one embodiment, the switch moves the token by sending a Delete Token command to the repeater that currently has it, causing the repeater to delete the token (and assorted MAC Address) from its list of supported mobile stations, and by sending an Add Token command to the repeater that is currently closest to the mobile station.

FIG. **4D** is one embodiment of a token-based process for handling packets. The process is performed by processing logic that may comprise hardware (circuitry, dedicated logic, etc.), software (such as is run on a general purpose computer system or a dedicated machine), or a combination of both.

Referring to FIG. **4D**, processing logic receives a token from the switch (processing block **470**) and stores the token in a table stored in a repeater memory that indicates all the mobile stations for which the repeater has a token (processing block **471**).

Subsequently, when processing logic receives a packet from mobile station (processing block **472**), processing logic compares the MAC address of the 802.11 packet from the mobile station with the address in the table (processing block **473**). At this time, processing logic tests whether the MAC address of a packet equals an address in the table (processing block **474**). If so, processing logic provides an acknowledgment (ACK) packet to the mobile station (processing block **475**). If not, processing logic ignores the packet.

Note that since all repeaters communicate the fact that they received a packet from a mobile station along with the received signal strength to switch **301**, switch **301** is able to determine the coverage area of the transmission of the mobile station. In one embodiment, each packet received by the switch **301** from the repeaters terminates in a network processor in switch **301** (e.g., network processor **1206** of FIG.

12), which determines the coverage area because it has access to the RSSI values. By determining the coverage area of the transmission, switch 301 is able to track the location of a particular device.

Downstream Communication Scheduling

For communications in the reverse direction (e.g., in the downstream direction), in one embodiment, the repeater transmitters are scheduled to reduce collisions. This scheduling is useful because repeaters can be close enough to interfere with one another. Because of this, switch 301 schedules the transmissions to prevent the collisions when the repeaters are actually transmitting.

For example, if a packet is destined for a particular IP address, then switch 301 performs an address translation to translate, for example, the IP address into an Ethernet MAC address. Switch 301 uses the Ethernet MAC address to search in a location tracking database to determine which repeater is closest to the mobile station having the Ethernet MAC address. Once the repeater is identified by switch 301, then switch 301 knows the switch port on which the packet should be sent so that it is sent to the repeater listed in the location tracking database (for forwarding by the repeater to the mobile station).

Once the repeater (and the port number) has been identified, switch 301 checks whether an interference problem would be created if the packet is sent by switch 301 to the mobile station at that time. An interference problem would be created if there are other transmissions that would be occurring when the packet is forwarded onto its destination mobile station. If no interference problem would exist, switch 301 sends the packet through the identified port to the repeater most recently determined to be closest to the mobile station. However, if an interference problem would be created by sending the packet immediately, then switch 301 delays sending the packet through the identified port to the repeater most recently determined to be closest to the mobile station.

In one embodiment, to determine if an interference problem would exist if a packet is sent immediately upon determining the switch port number on which the packet is to be sent, switch 301 maintains and uses two databases. One of the databases indicates which of the repeaters interfere with each other during their transmissions. This database is examined for every downstream packet that is to be sent and switch 301 schedules the transmission of downstream packets so that repeaters that interfere with each other when they transmit at the same time do not transmit at the same time. The other database is a listing of mobile stations and the corresponding set of repeaters that last received the transmissions. If two mobile stations have overlapping sets, then it is possible for their acknowledgement packets to interfere when they simultaneously receive non-interfering data packets from different repeaters. Because mobile stations send acknowledge packets upon receiving downstream packets, there is a possibility that mobile stations will interfere with each other when sending their acknowledgement packets. Switch 301 takes this information into account during scheduling and schedules downstream packets to the mobile stations to reduce the occurrence of mobile stations interfering with other when sending acknowledgment packets.

The information in these two databases may be collected by sending out test packets to the WLAN to determine which repeaters and mobile devices cause the interference described above.

Location-Tracking by Received Signal Strength (RSSI)

FIG. 5A illustrates one technique for location tracking by RSSI. Referring to FIG. 5A, switch 301 obtains the RSSI for

each packet received by the repeaters and may have multiple RSSI values for a packet when that packet is received by two or more different repeaters. More specifically, a mobile station communicates with two (or more) repeaters and one repeater is going to have a stronger received signal strength than the other for the same packet. Based on this information, switch 301 is able to determine that a mobile station is closer to one repeater than the other. By continually monitoring the received signal strength, switch 301 can track the movement of a mobile station with respect to the repeaters.

FIG. 5B is a flow diagram of one embodiment of a process for performing location tracking by a switch. The process is performed by processing logic that may comprise hardware (circuitry, dedicated logic, etc.), software (such as is run on a general purpose computer system or a dedicated machine), or a combination of both. In one embodiment, the processing logic comprises a network processor in the switch (e.g., network processor 1206 of FIG. 12).

Referring to FIG. 5B, processing logic compares the RSSI for the duplicate packets received by different repeaters from a mobile station (processing block 550) and tests whether the repeater with the highest RSSI for the packet is the repeater listed as closest to the mobile station in a location tracking table (e.g., database) (processing block 551). If not, processing logic updates the table to indicate that the repeater that received the packet with the highest RSSI is the closest repeater (processing block 552). Processing logic also switches port assignment for the mobile station to the new repeater.

In one embodiment, the location tracking table may include a listing of mobile stations and their individually assigned repeaters. This table may also include, or include instead of the assigned repeater, an indication of the switch port by which the switch is to communicate with the repeater assigned to each mobile station.

Mobility Supported by Routing

FIG. 6 illustrates mobility supported by routing. Referring to FIG. 6, the dotted arrow path for communication from switch 301 to mobile station 601 through repeater 302₂ is the original communication path with the network. As the mobile station 601 moves, a routing handoff occurs so that communication occurs over the solid arrowed path. In order to accomplish this handoff, switch 301 reroutes the packet to a different port. For example, if the first communication path illustrated as the dotted line arrow was on port 1, switch 301 may switch the packet to port 5, the port that associated with the communication path through repeater 302₀. Thus, mobility is supported by simply moving a packet to a different port of switch 301 that is assigned to a different repeater. In such a situation, the mobility provisions of the 802.11 protocol may be ignored.

In one embodiment, switch 301 determines that a particular mobile station is closer to a different repeater (by monitoring the received signal strength of duplicate packets). As described above, switch 301 maintains a table (e.g., database) of all mobile stations in the 802.11 network and includes an indication of the repeater closest to each mobile station. Switch 301 performs port-based routing and may use the table in the same manner an IP routing table is used. Switch 301 has an Ethernet port for each repeater. When switch 301 determines that a mobile station is closer to a repeater that is different than the one listed in the database (based on the received signal strength of duplicate packets among multiple repeaters), then switch 301 updates the database. Thereafter, if a packet is received by switch 301 for that mobile station,

11

switch **301** merely sends it out on the Ethernet port assigned to the repeater that was most recently determined to be the closest to that mobile station.

Multi-Switch System

FIG. 7 illustrates one embodiment of a multi-switch system. Referring to FIG. 7, the network architecture includes switches **701** and **702** are communicably coupled to server **712**. In one embodiment, server **712** is part of a LAN backbone through which access to the Internet and incorporates other resources made. Alternatively, server **712** may act as an interface to another portion of the communication system. Each of switches **701** and **702** is coupled to one or more repeaters in the same manner as described above with respect to FIG. 3. In still another embodiment, server **712** may exist within one of, or both, switches **701** and **702**.

Protocol Architecture

FIG. 8 illustrates one embodiment of a protocol architecture. Referring to FIG. 8, switch **801** is shown having a network layer **801A** and a MAC layer **801B**. In one embodiment, the network layer **801A** comprises a TCP/IP network layer. MAC sublayer **801B** communicates with a MAC sublayer of each of repeaters **802₁-802_N**. Thus, in contrast to the prior art in which the 802.11 MAC layer is completely within the access point, the 802.11 MAC layer is split between switch **301** and repeaters **802₁-802_N**, and the MAC sublayer of the repeaters performs much less functionality than the MAC sublayer of the access points described above.

In one embodiment, the repeater MAC sublayer is responsible for performing portions of the 802.11 protocol including handling CSMA/CA, DIFS/EIFS interframe spacing (IFS) timing, SIFS timing and control, beacon frames (during transmit only), generating acknowledgement (of ACK) frames (during transmit only) on data packets received, such as 802.11 data frames and generating CTS (clear-to-send) frames in response to RTS (request-to-send) frames. The repeater MAC sublayer may also respond to the resetting of internal network allocation vectors (NAV's) which are embedded into (e.g., RTS and CTS frames). Each of the above repeater MAC functions may be implemented in a manner that is well-known is the art.

In addition to the MAC sublayer, each of repeaters **802₁-802_N** includes an 802.11 physical layer or other wireless physical layer.

The switch MAC sublayer is responsible for handling multiple frame types during reception from the repeaters. In one embodiment, the MAC frame types the switch is capable of handling include an association request, reassociation request, probe request, ATIM, disassociation, authentication, deauthentication, PS-Pol, CTS (updates NAV in repeaters), ACK (in response to data frames), data and Null.

The switch MAC frame types that are accommodated during transmission include an association response, a reassociation response, probe response, ATIM, disassociation, deauthentication, PS-Pole, data, Null and RTS (updates NAV in repeater). It should be noted that the MAC frame types that the switch accommodates during receive and transmit are well known in the arts and part of the 802.11 standard. Each of the above switch MAC functions may be implemented in a manner that is well-known is the art

FIG. 10 illustrates one embodiment of a hardware architecture for a repeater. Referring to FIG. 10, an RF chip **1002** receives and transmits RF transmissions using antenna **1003**. In one embodiment, RF chip **1002** comprises a standard 802.11 RF chip. In one embodiment, antenna **1003** comprises a dual-diversity antenna. Communications received by RF chip **1002** are forwarded on to baseband processor **1001**, which is a digital chip that is described in further detail below.

12

Similarly, transmissions to be sent are received by RF chip **1002** from baseband processor **1001**.

Baseband processor **1001** is a digital chip that performs the reduced MAC functions as described above. The repeater also includes a port for coupling to switch, port **1007**. Baseband processor **1001** handles communication with switch **301** using this port. In one embodiment, this port also transfers information through the port at 100 Mb/s bits per second. Port **107** may also provide power to baseband processor **1001**.

A desktop port **1006** may be included to allow desktop or other systems to plug into the repeater. Also, in one embodiment, an LEDs **1005**, such as an activity LED, power LED, and/or link LED, may be included in the repeater as well.

FIG. 11 is a block diagram of one embodiment of the baseband processor of a repeater. Baseband processor **1001** includes a repeater MAC and control unit **1105** that interfaces with RF chip **1002** using a protocol. In one embodiment, the interface comprises a TCP/IP layer and an 802.11 MAC sublayer. The repeater MAC/control unit **1105** is coupled to switch **1103**. In one embodiment, MAC/control unit **1105** communicates with switch **1103** using a TCP/IP layer and an 802.11 MAC sublayer tunneled inside Ethernet packets. Switch **1103** is also coupled to MAC/PHY layer unit **1104** which interfaces the baseband processor to desktop port **1006**. Switch **1103** is also coupled to the activity/power/link LEDs **1005**. Similarly switch **1103** is coupled to the MAC/physical layer unit **1001** that interfaces the rest of the components on baseband processor **1001** to switch port **1007** via switch **1103**. Also coupled to switch port **1007** is a power distribution unit **1102**. In one embodiment, power distribution unit obtains power from the CAT5 wiring and provides it to the rest of baseband processor **1001**.

FIG. 12 is a block diagram of one embodiment of a switch. Referring to FIG. 12, the switch includes one or more ports **1201** to repeaters **1201**. Although 12 are shown, any number may be included. Ports **1201** are coupled to a switching processor **1202**. In one embodiment, switching processor **1202** switches 13 ports of gigabit Ethernet and allows broadcast packets to be received on one port and broadcast on the others without involving the rest of the switch. In one embodiment, switching processor **1202** comprises a Broadcom BRCM 5633 gigabit switching processor.

HyperTransport controller **1203** is coupled to switching processor **1202** and provides a gigabit ethernet interface to the rest of the switch architecture. In one embodiment, the HyperTransport controller **1203** includes a diagnostic porthole **1204** and another ethernet port **1205** for use, for example, coupled to a corporate LAN.

In one embodiment, HyperTransport controller **1203** comprises a Galaileo HyperTransport controller sold by Marvell.

A network processor **1206** is coupled to HyperTransport controller **1203** and performs the majority of the functions of the switch, including the receiver diversity functions and location-tracking functions described above, with the exception of the rebroadcast of the broadcast packets received by the switch, which is handled by switching processor **1202**. In one embodiment, network processor **1206** is coupled to a boot memory **1209**, a DRAM **1207** and one or more LED's **1208**. In one embodiment, network processor **1206** comprises a PMC-Sierra RM9000X2 sold by PMC-Sierra, boot memory **1209** comprises an MB boot flash AMD AM29LV640D boot flash memory and DRAM **1207** comprises 64 MB synchronous DRAM (SDRAM).

In one embodiment, the network processor **1206** includes a PCI interface to a processor **1210**. Processor **1210** may host certain applications, such as, for example, firewall applica-

tions. Processor **1210** may perform these functions with the use of hard disk **1211**, DRAM **1213** and console port **1211**. Console port **1211** may provide access to a monitor or keyboard or other peripheral device. In one embodiment, processor **1210** comprises a pentium processor manufactured by Intel Corporation of Santa Clara, Calif.

In one embodiment, network processor **1206** executes software instructions, which performs the 802.11 MAC layer. Network processor **1206** may also execute a wireless LAN configuration module to configure the wireless LAN network, a priority traffic administration (e.g., traffic shaping) module, a management software (e.g., Cisco IOS), a security protocol (e.g., 802.1x) module, and a VPN/firewall module. Processor **1210** executes a location tracking module to perform the location tracking. Processor **1210** may also execute one or more of the following software modules: clustering/HA, RADIUS/DHCP, session mobility, third party applications, XML Web services, user administration software, and network management software.

Reconfiguration of the Communication System

A technique described herein allows for the performance of an automatic site survey to reconfigure the wireless communication network. As part of the process, the repeaters in essence cause their own reconfiguration by providing information to the switch that the switch uses to determine whether reconfiguration is necessary. In one embodiment, as a result of performing the reconfiguration process, one or more repeaters may change their state from activated, deactivated, or hot standby to another state and/or change their transmitter power level and/or receiver sensitivity. When in the activated state, a repeater is able to receive packets from sending devices (e.g., mobile devices in the network) and transmit packets to those devices. When in the deactivated state, a repeater is not able to receive packets from nor transmit packets to other devices (e.g., mobile devices in the network). When in the hot standby state, a repeater is able to receive packets from sending devices but not transmit packets to those devices. It is possible that a repeater may not change its state as part of the reconfiguration process, but may change its transmit power level and/or its receiver sensitivity.

The reconfiguration of the network includes turning on and off repeaters and adjusting transmitter power levels and receiver sensitivity. The reconfiguration occurs periodically. Reconfiguration may occur after a predetermined period of time (e.g., an hour) or a predetermined amount of activity. The reconfiguration may occur in response to an event. For example, if the activity of a repeater receives a predetermined number of packets within a predetermined period of time or the rate of packet reception increases by a predetermined amount, then the reconfiguration may be performed. For another example, the event may comprise a mobile station entering a particular location (e.g., a conference room) where a repeater is located and not on (thereby causing the system to be reconfigured to have the repeater activated). When the event occurs, an alarm in the switch is triggered, causing the switch to run the reconfiguration process.

FIG. **13** is a flow diagram of one embodiment of a process for reconfiguring the wireless communication system. Referring to FIG. **13**, the process begins by each repeater that is activated or in the hot standby state sending the received signal strength indication, as set forth above, along with the SNR for each packet received cleanly to the switch (processing block **1301**). As described above, the received signal strength and SNR may be determined on a packet-by-packet basis. Also as discussed above, communications between the

repeater(s) and the switch(es) occur via a wired connection (e.g., an Ethernet connection).

In response to sending the packet(s), the switch receives the packet(s) (processing block **1302**) and determines the amount of wireless communication activity each repeater is experiencing (processing block **1303**).

More specifically, the repeater receives a packet and embedded in the packet header is the Ethernet MAC address of the sending device. When the repeater forwards that packet to the switch, it attaches the received signal strength and SNR values. In response to the packet, the switch is able to open up the packet and determine that the packet is from another unique IP address and, thus, another unique user. Based on this, the switch determines the density of unique users on a particular repeater. In other words, the switch determines the number of unique users (mobile stations) sending packets that are being received by an individual repeater. The switch may use a database to maintain this information. This database may be the location tracking database described above.

Based on the location and density of the repeaters as tracked by the switch, using the information sent with the packet(s) from the repeater(s), the switch determines which repeaters to activate, deactivate, or move to the hot standby state (processing block **1304**). The switch also determines the transmitter power levels for the repeaters that are activated (processing block **1305**). The transmitter power levels are the power levels used by the repeaters when transmitting packets wirelessly to other devices in the network. The switch may also adjust the receive sensitivity of one or more of the repeaters (processing block **1306**). In one embodiment, the switch causes these changes to be made by sending control commands to the repeater over a wired connection (e.g., the Ethernet connection).

Thus, if the switch determines that a particular repeater is to be activated (the repeater can receive and transmit), deactivated (the repeater cannot receive nor transmit), or placed in hot standby mode (the repeater can receive but cannot transmit) or that changes to repeater's transmitters power level and/or the repeater's receiver sensitivity are necessary, then the switch sends a command to the repeater specifying the desired action.

In one embodiment, if the number of unique users being received cleanly by a repeater in a hot standby state is above a threshold, then the switch activates the repeater.

This reconfiguration process has a number of advantages over the prior art. For example, as part of the reconfiguration process in the prior art, an access point may have to be moved. This is because there are typically no additional access points in the area that are not already being used because of their expense. In contrast, because repeaters are generally cheaper devices, many more of them may be distributed throughout the network, even though they are not going to be used all the time. Thus, when there is a need for additional capacity, one of the repeaters that is not currently activated can be activated.

In one embodiment, the reconfiguration of the wireless communication system may include changing the transmit power levels of the mobile stations. As with the reconfiguration described above, the purpose of this reconfiguration of the mobile station is to improve network capacity. The improvement to network capacity may be due to a reduced interference to repeaters and other mobile stations in adjacent coverage cells that a mobile station causes because its transmit power level is changed.

The reconfiguration of the mobile stations may occur in response to the switch examining the interference in a particular area and comparing this interference with a predetermined amount of interference (e.g., a threshold). The prede-

15

terminated amount of interference may be based on an allowable amount of interference for the wireless communication system or an allowable amount of variance from the allowable amount of interference.

The switch (or other control entity) determines the amount to change the transmit power level. In order to determine the amount of change to a particular transmit power level, the switch initially determines what the current transmit power level is. In one embodiment, the switch sends a query as a control message to the mobile station to obtain the transmit power level of the mobile station. Alternatively, the switch maintains a list (e.g., a database) of the transmit power levels of the mobile stations and accesses the list to obtain the transmit power level for a particular mobile station. The switch may obtain this information from the mobile stations. In addition, the switch might also send a command to the mobile station to modify its power level on a percentage basis. This would not require the knowledge of a specific power level. For example, in one embodiment, the mobile stations send a control message to the switch at bootup indicating their transmit power level.

Once the current transmit power level has been obtained, the switch determines the amount to change the transmit power level. This may be based on the received signal strength (e.g., RSSI) of the packets received by the repeater currently assigned to the mobile station. For example, if the received signal strength is very high, yet the mobile station is causing interference (e.g., its packets are being received by one or more other repeaters), the switch may cause the mobile station to reduce its transmit power level to a predetermined level or by a predetermined amount (e.g., a percentage of its current transmit power level) because the effect of such a reduction would not prevent its packets from being received by its assigned repeater.

The change in the transmit power level may be performed in a number of ways. For example, in one embodiment, the switch controls the transmit power level of the mobile station(s). In such a case, the switch may send a command message to the mobile station, via a repeater, to cause the mobile station to adjust its transmit power level. The command could indicate that the mobile station should increase or decrease its transmit power level. Alternatively, such a command could come from a repeater or a control entity in the communication system other than the switch.

Whereas many alterations and modifications of the present invention will no doubt become apparent to a person of ordinary skill in the art after having read the foregoing description, it is to be understood that any particular embodiment shown and described by way of illustration is in no way intended to be considered limiting. Therefore, references to details of various embodiments are not intended to limit the scope of the claims which in themselves recite only those features regarded as essential to the invention.

I claim:

1. A method for configuring a wireless communication network of devices, comprising:

- (A) receiving from a first repeater data packets received without errors and information associated with the data packets;
- (B) determining an amount of wireless communication activity the first repeater is experiencing based on the data packets received without errors and the information associated with the data packets;
- (C) determining whether to cause at least one of the first repeater and a second repeater to change status regarding wireless reception and transmission of data packets from other devices in the network based on the amount of

16

wireless communication activity, wherein determining whether to cause the change in status includes determining whether to cause a change in a repeater transmitter power level and in a repeater receiver sensitivity; and

- (D) causing the change the status by signaling a command to cause an adjustment in the repeater transmitter power level and in the repeater receiver sensitivity.
- 2. The method of claim 1, wherein step (A) comprises:
 - (A)(i) receiving from the first repeater the data packets received without errors and received signal strength information and signal-to-noise-ratio (SNR) associated with the data packets.
- 3. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one of step (A), (B), and (C) is performed periodically.
- 4. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one of step (A), (B), and (C) is performed in response to an event.
- 5. The method of claim 4, wherein the event comprises a the first repeater receiving a predetermined number of data packets from the other devices in the network in a predetermined period of time.
- 6. The method of claim 4, wherein the event comprises a change in a rate at which the first repeater receives data packets being above a predetermined threshold.
- 7. The method of claim 1, wherein step (D) comprises:
 - (D)(i) causing the change in the status by sending the command to the at least one of the first repeater and the second repeater to cause the adjustment in the repeater transmitter power level and the repeater receiver sensitivity.
- 8. The method of claim 1, wherein step (A) comprises:
 - (A)(i) receiving from the first repeater 802.11 data packets.
- 9. The method of claim 8, wherein step (A) further comprises:
 - (A)(ii) embedding the 802.11 data packets and information associated with the 802.11 data packets in one or more other packets.
- 10. The method of claim 9, wherein step (A)(ii) comprises:
 - (A)(ii)(a) embedding the 802.11 data packets and the information associated with the 802.11 data packets with received signal strength information and signal-to-noise-ratio (SNR) for the 802.11 data packets.
- 11. The method of claim 9, wherein step (A)(ii) comprises:
 - (A)(ii)(a) embedding the 802.11 data packets and the information associated with the 802.11 data packets in one or more Ethernet packets.
- 12. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 - the switch accessing a location tracking database to maintain a number of mobile stations for which the at least one of the first repeater and the second repeater is receiving packets.
- 13. An apparatus for configuring a wireless communication network of devices, comprising:
 - a switch receiving from at least one repeater data packets received without errors and received signal strength information and signal-to-noise-ratio (SNR) associated with each of the data packets;
 - the switch, in response to receiving the data packets and information, determining an amount of wireless communication activity each of the at least one repeater is experiencing based on the data packets and the information received from each of the at least one repeater;
 - the switch determining whether to cause one or more repeaters to change status regarding wireless reception and transmission of data packets from other devices in the network based on the amount of wireless communication activity experienced by each of the at least one repeater and the information received from the at least

17

one repeater, wherein determining whether to cause the change in status includes determining whether to cause a change in repeater transmitter power levels and repeater receiver sensitivity for the one or more repeaters; and

the switch causing a change in the status for at least one of the one or more repeaters by sending a command to the at least one of the one or more repeaters to cause an adjustment in the repeater transmitter power levels and the repeater receiver sensitivity.

14. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the operations of the switch determining an amount of wireless communication activity, determining whether to cause one or more repeaters to change status, and causing a change in the status are performed periodically.

15. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the operations of the switch determining an amount of wireless communication activity, determining whether to cause one or more repeaters to change status, and causing a change in the status are performed in response to an event.

16. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein the event comprises a repeater of the at least one repeaters receiving a predetermined number of data packets from devices in the network in a predetermined period to time.

17. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein the event comprises a change in a rate at which a repeater of the at least one repeaters receives data packets being above a predetermined threshold.

18. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the each data packet comprises an 802.11 packet.

19. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the each data packet comprises an 802.11 packet, and further comprising embedding the 802.11 packet and the information in another packet.

20. The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the another packet comprises an Ethernet packet.

21. The apparatus of claim 13, further comprising:
the switch accessing a location tracking database to maintain an amount of wireless communication activity each of the at least one repeater is experiencing.

22. An apparatus for configuring a wireless communication network of devices, comprising:

means for receiving from a first repeater data packets received without errors by and information associated with the data packets;

means for determining an amount of wireless communication activity the first repeater is experiencing based on the data packets received without errors and the information associated with the data packets;

means for determining whether to cause at least one of the first repeater and a second repeater to change status regarding wireless reception and transmission of data packets from other devices in the network based on the amount of wireless communication activity, wherein determining whether to cause the change in status includes determining whether to cause a change in a repeater transmitter power level and in a repeater receiver sensitivity; and

means for causing the change the status by signaling a command to cause an adjustment in the repeater transmitter power level and in the repeater receiver sensitivity.

23. The apparatus of claim 22, wherein the information associated with the data packets comprises received signal strength information and signal-to-noise-ratio (SNR) associated with the data packets.

24. The apparatus of claim 22, wherein the means for determining an amount of wireless communication activity,

18

means for determining whether to cause one or more repeaters to change status, and means for causing a change in the status operate periodically.

25. The apparatus of claim 22, wherein the means for determining an amount of wireless communication activity, means for determining whether to cause one or more repeaters to change status, and means for causing a change in the status operate in response to an event.

26. The apparatus of claim 25, wherein the event comprises the first repeater receiving a predetermined number of data packets from the other devices in the network in a predetermined period of time.

27. The apparatus of claim 25, wherein the event comprises a change in a rate at which the first repeater receives the data packets being above a predetermined threshold.

28. The apparatus of claim 22, further comprising:
means for sending the command to the at least one of the first repeater and the second repeater to cause the adjustment in the repeater transmitter power level and the repeater receiver sensitivity.

29. The apparatus of claim 22, wherein the data packets comprise 802.11 data packets.

30. The apparatus of claim 29, further comprising:
means for embedding the 802.11 data packets and information associated with the 802.11 data packets in one or more other packets.

31. The apparatus of claim 30, wherein the information associated with the 802.11 data packets comprises received signal strength information and signal-to-noise-ratio (SNR) for the 802.11 data packets in the one or more other packets.

32. The apparatus of claim 30, wherein the one or more other packets comprises one or more Ethernet packets.

33. The apparatus of claim 22, further comprising:
means for accessing a location tracking database to maintain a number of mobile stations for which the at least one of the first repeater and the second repeater is receiving data packets.

34. An apparatus for configuring a wireless communication network of devices comprising:

means for receiving from at least one repeater data packets received without errors and received signal strength information and signal-to-noise-ratio (SNR) associated with the data packets;

means for, in response to receiving the data packets and information, determining an amount of wireless communication activity each of the at least one repeater is experiencing based on the data packets and the information received from each of the at least one repeater;

means for determining whether to cause one or more repeaters to change status regarding wireless reception and transmission of data packets from other devices in the network based on the amount of wireless communication activity experienced by each of the at least one repeater and the information received from the at least one repeater, wherein determining whether to cause the change in status includes determining whether to cause a change in repeater transmitter power levels and repeater receiver sensitivity for the one or more repeaters; and

means for causing a change in the status for at least one of the one or more repeaters by sending a command to the at least one of the one or more repeaters to cause an adjustment in the repeater transmitter power levels and the repeater receiver sensitivity.

35. The apparatus of claim 34, wherein the means for determining an amount of wireless communication activity,

19

means for determining whether to cause one or more repeaters to change status, and means for causing a change in the status operate periodically.

36. The apparatus of claim **34**, wherein the means for determining an amount of wireless communication activity, means for determining whether to cause one or more repeaters to change status, and means for causing a change in the status operate in response to an event.

37. The apparatus of claim **36**, wherein the event comprises a repeater of the at least one repeaters receiving a predetermined number of data packets from devices in the network in a predetermined period of time.

38. The apparatus of claim **36**, wherein the event comprises a change in a rate at which a repeater of the at least one repeaters receives data packets being above a predetermined threshold.

20

39. The apparatus of claim **34**, wherein the each data packet comprises an 802.11 packet.

40. The apparatus of claim **39**, wherein said each data packet comprises an 802.11 packet, and further comprising means for embedding the 802.11 packet and the information in another packet.

41. The apparatus of claim **40**, wherein the another packet comprises an Ethernet packet.

42. The apparatus of claim **34**, further comprising:
means for accessing a location tracking database to maintain a number of mobile stations for which at least one repeater is receiving data packets.

* * * * *

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

PATENT NO. : 7,515,557 B1
APPLICATION NO. : 10/133804
DATED : April 7, 2009
INVENTOR(S) : Harry Bims

Page 1 of 1

It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:

At column 16, line 5, "causing the change the status by" should be replaced by --causing the change in the status by--.

At column 17, line 58, "causing the change the status by" should be replaced by --causing the change in the status by--.

Signed and Sealed this

Thirtieth Day of June, 2009



JOHN DOLL

Acting Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office